JHELUM

The River Through My Backyard

Khalid Bashir Ahmad

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By the same author: *Sada-e-Neem Shab,* Collection of Urdu poems.

TO

MOTHER

The line of beauty was never more faithfully depicted in landscape than by the course of the broad and beautiful Jhelum : *Vigne*

FOREWORD

One of my childhood memories about the Jhelum is when a soldier referred to it as a *nadi* I felt my pride melting away into its waters. It was as if the man had not belittled the river but Kashmir as a whole. A *nadi* in my estimation was a small watercourse such as I had seen flowing through the countryside. The Jhelum, in contrast, was a *darya* (river), running from the south to the north of my motherland. The feeling of greatness carried about itself by *darya* was somehow missing in the word *nadi*. The soldier's words left me bitter until many years later when it dawned upon me that rivers as huge as the Ganges were also called *nadi* in Hindi.

The Jhelum flows across my neighbourhood, precisely, through my backyard. I have grown up watching it shrink and swell in different seasons of the year. I love it the most when in spate. To me it simply looks gorgeous overleaping its embankments. I feel sorry for the people who suffer because of a flooded Jhelum but frankly speaking, I do not want it to recede once it is high on its banks. For, then I correlate it with the sense of pride of a Kashmiri that I had felt hurt in my childhood.

Having known the river as my next door neighbour ever since I began to walk, I have, however, never ventured into its waters for fear of drowning. I can only pity myself for not having learnt swimming. The fear of being swept away by the Jhelum was rooted in the oft-repeated warning by elders in the house to stay away from the river whenever I sought permission to go out to play with the children of my age. Occasionally, though, I would ignore the warning and go to the riverbank as well. The liberties were few and my physical intimacy with the Jhelum remained limited to taking a bath once in a while on its bank in company of my friends, some of whom would dare to go a feet or two deeper into it than from where I would take a dip. I am still possessed by the fear of drowning and it has been ages since I have so much as washed hands at its banks. Over the years, however, my love for the river has progressed.

About the Jhelum I feel like Wordsworth singing the river Derwent on whose banks he was born and brought up :

...the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams....
Travelling over the green plains
Near my 'sweet birthplace', dids't thou, beauteous stream,
Make ceaseless music through the night and day.

To me, the Jhelum is not just a river. It is the symbol of the land to which I belong. The present work is the manifestation of this sense of belonging.

It was in the summer of 1994 when I was looking for some literature on the Dal and the Chinar, the two beauties of Kashmir, that I chanced upon a page or two about the Jhelum. I had a feeling that not much written material was available on the river. The Jhelum, I thought, was an interesting topic to work on. I discussed it with my friend, Javed Azar, who liked the idea and together we made a synopsis of an article on the Jhelum. In the course of my research, I was proved correct in respect of the scarcity of material on the subject. A reference about some bridges here and a mention about a tributary there was all that was forthcoming. Travelogues by foreigners also talked about some events related with the river but essentially it was the story of the drainage of the *Satisar* and the emergence of the *Vitasta,* as told in the *Nilmata Purana* and echoed by later chronicles, that was available in detail.

I wanted to look at the Jhelum beyond what had been shown for centuries through the lenses of mythology. The river, I feel, is an entity breathing life, feeling joy and sorrow and, like humans, bearing some beautiful features as well as some ugly spots. It needed to be looked at from that angle too. By the time I had collected enough material to start writing, I discovered that the subject demanded a much larger canvas than offered by an article. Accordingly, I revised my synopsis and divided the work into several chapters that, in my estimation, covered all the different facets of the Jhelum.

When I started working on the draft material, the subject unfolded itself with all its charm. However, I worked leisurely without binding myself to any time schedule. There were intervals, extending to several months, when I did not write even a single word. The slow pace with which I finally completed the job was, nevertheless, accompanied by a commitment to myself to take the work to its logical end.

I have enjoyed writing this book as much as I did researching for it and meeting and interviewing people to collect information. My effort has been to interweave into its texture all that is significant about the river- mythology, history, culture, literature and economy. The source materials have been derived from ancient texts, chronicles, travelogues and scientific and literary studies. The book is the first attempt to present a detailed work on the Jhelum and I feel a sense of relief to have completed it.

Since the Jhelum is a mute witness to the centuries' developments in history, culture and social ethos of Kashmir, one cannot but give a brief account of the events happening along its banks and, therefore, these have been incorporated in the text itself to present a historical and cultural backdrop to the flow of the subject matter The footnote elaboration has been avoided as it often leads to disruption of the rapport a reader establishes with the reading material.

I am grateful to all those who helped in making this book possible. A mention of Shakeela Shawl of the Research and Reference Section, J&K Information Department, Srinagar, is being especially made for lending me some books of great help. Interviews and interaction with writers, experts and officials, some of whom no longer hold the posts they did at the time of my interview with them, have also proved helpful. Of these, Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din, Dr. M. R. D. Kundangar, Dr. A. R. Yusuf, Dr. Shafi Shoque, Mr. Nisar Ahmad, Dr. M. A. Kawoosa, and Dr. M. I. Bhat deserve special mention.

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Khalid Bashir Ahmad

February 20, 2001
Sonawar, Srinagar,
Kashmir - 190 004
E.mail: khalidbashir@vsnl.com

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PROLOGUE

When Mughal emperor Jahangir was asked at his deathbed about his desire, he drew out a deep sigh and said, "*Kashmir digar haich*"[1] (Kashmir, the rest is worthless). His son and successor, Shah Jahan, ill and away from Kashmir, once recited a couplet saying to Almighty, "Adam ate the wheat and he was (therefore) driven out of Paradise; I took only barley-water. O God, take me to Kashmir"[2]. Sir Mohammad Iqbal went a step further and declared, "In her [Kashmir's] mountains, rivers and sunset, I have seen God unveiled"[3]. An ardent lover of Kashmir equated it with Paradise[4]. Another likened it to a supremely beautiful woman whose beauty is almost impersonal and above human desire[5]. To Kalhana, "Kailasa is the best place in the three worlds, Himalaya the best part of Kailasa, and Kashmir the best place in Himalaya"[6].

Kashmir is undoubtedly the only piece of land which has been so generously eulogised in prose and poetry and yet defies description. Poets and writers use all the ingenuity and sophistication at their command to describe its charm, of which there is abundance in its air, soil and water. It is difficult, almost impossible, to contain within the confines of language the praise of Kashmir. To quote Hafiz, "drawing a picture of Kashmir is as difficult as drawing a stream of milk [by the Persian folk-hero, Farhad, for his beloved Shirin from the Mount Bisutun]"[7].

Surrounded by spotless white mountain peaks that nearly touch the sky, gushing streams running down the hills and a refreshing breeze blowing through the meadows, the Valley of Kashmir is a dreamland where a holiday is said to be a holy day.

People find the place satisfactory to their various interests. In the words of Walter Lawrence: "There is sport varied and excellent, there is scenery for the artist and the layman, mountains for the mountaineer, flowers for the botanist, a vast field for the geologist, and magnificent ruins for the archaeologist. The epicure will find dainty fruits and vegetables cheaper here than perhaps in any part of the world, while the lounger can pass delightful days of *dolce far niente* in the mat house-boats moored under a shady chinar tree"[8].

History shrouded in mythology

The history of Kashmir, both physical and political, is shrouded in legend and mythology. The two have been interwoven with actual happenings in such a manner that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. The earliest sources upon which the historians have been heavily depending are the *Nilmata Purana* and the *Rajatarangini,* both Sanskrit works. While the former, believed to have been composed in the 6th or the 7th century AD, is essentially a religious text dealing with the sacred places, rituals and ceremonials of Kashmir, the latter is the amalgam of history, religious beliefs of a particular faith and poetry, depending, in turn, on the former as its source material.

The narratives, though of high literary value, are thus hard to be regarded as the authentic and unbiased sources of history. Added to this are distortions and changes that have crept into the texts over the centuries. Several writers have alluded to this. Thus, Aurel Stein, the English translator of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* writes about *Nilmata*: "The text is unfortunately in a very bad condition, owing to numerous lacunae and textual corruption of all kinds"[9], and also adds, "It appears to me by no means improbable that the text has undergone changes and possibly additions at later periods"[10].

Walter Lawrence, who has extensively quoted from the *Rajatarangini* in his famous book, 'The Valley of Kashmir', is ready to accept it as "a trustworthy record from the middle of the ninth century onwards"[11] only. Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din adds, "In the absence of any positive evidence to the contrary, these Sanskrit works began to be taken as the source material for our history, if not the actual history, and thus an orbit was marked within which the researchers had to work in order to construct the history of Kashmir"[12]. He holds that around the 5th century AD, when Hinduism replaced Buddhism in the Valley, *mahatyams*, source of information on Hindu *tirthas* (sacred places), were written in Kashmir about her physical features subscribing to the beliefs of a particular faith[13].

Buddhism as a religion reigned Kashmir for more than a millennium[14] and we know it as a very flourishing faith in the Valley during the 2nd and the 3rd century BC and even later, so much so that we had some isolated Buddhist influentials in the Valley as late as in the 14th and the 15th century like Rinchen, who subsequently converted and became the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir, and Tilakacharya, a Buddhist minister in the court of Zain-ul-Aabideen.

The religion was very popular with the people of Kashmir which is also borne out by the fact that the Kushan ruler, Kanishka, held the 4th World Buddhist Conference here. Arrival of Buddhist scholars like Hieun Tsiang in Kashmir too points to this fact. Kashmiri Buddhist scholars and monks spread the message of the Buddha to Central Asia, China and Korea on the one side and, on the other, to Sri Lanka, Java and Sumatra[15]. The religion travelled to Ladakh, a Buddhist populated area even today, from the Valley.

That such a popular faith should have been wiped out from Kashmir so as not to leave behind any significant cultural or archaeological traces contrary to the later Hindu period the religious and other historical buildings and ruins of which are still scattered all over Kashmir, strengthens the argument that the Buddhist culture was demolished by the rulers of the faith taking over from those of the previous one.

Notwithstanding this, the significance of the *Nilmata* and the *Rajatarangini* cannot be underestimated. The fact that the two are the earliest written sources of the physical and political history of Kashmir is reason enough for their celebrated status as reference material. And that is precisely why the two are profusely quoted on the subject of Kashmir, her people and places.

Mythology and geology

The Valley of Kashmir had been a huge water body before it took the form of land millions of years ago. Mythology and geology both agree to that point. The agreement, however, does not go beyond that. While mythology names the water body as *Satisar*, geologists say it was a part of the Tethys Ocean. The two have divergent explanations to offer with regard to the emergence of the Valley. The *Nilmata* says that the *Satisar* was drained, on the plea of Kashyapa, by Ananta, who broke the Himalaya with his plough, when commanded to do so by god Janardhana, and the water flowed forth out of the lake.

The legend about the drainage of water and the place becoming habitable for humans is not unique to Kashmir. Such myths are available elsewhere also and no one knows which of these is the mother of all such fables. In China, for instance, a similar legend is in existence regarding the drainage of water making the land habitable for humans and the emergence of the three-gorge river, Yangtze. "In the demi-world where history intersects myth, it is said that the gorges were created by the ingenious folk hero, Yu, who, with the help of a troop of dragons, reconfigured China's hills and valleys to drain the land and make it habitable for humans"[16]. An old Chinese saying subscribes to this belief thus: "But for Yu, we all should have been fishes"[17].

Geologists, on the other hand, credit the drainage of water in Kashmir to the tectonic changes that resulted from the collision of the Indian plate with the Asian plate. According to them, the great Himalayan range itself was a part of the Tethys Ocean. That the tectonic activity had a role in the formation of the original lake and its desiccation can be traced from the karewas in the Valley[18]. The soil contains remains of fresh water fish and fossil oysters and also embedded in the layers of the earth may be found the black shells of water chestnuts at a height of 1500 feet above the level of the Valley[19]. These indicate fluvial origin. The flat and uniformly even surface of *karewas* is also attributed to their having remained submerged for ages beneath the waters of a deep vast lake.

Kashmir - name and origin

So far as the name Kashmir is concerned, the propounders of the *Satisar* theory claim it to be the corrupted form of *Kasmira*, a combination of two Sanskrit words, *Ka* and *Samira*, together meaning, 'the land from which water was drained by *Ka* or *Prajapati* (the Lord)' or 'the land from which water (*ka*) was drained by the wind (*samira*)'. The word *mir*, however, means a mountain. Scholars do not agree with the explanation and argue that "Even if the word Kashmir were the original name, it would mean the mountain of *Kash* and not the piece of land from which water was drained by *Ka*"[20], adding "we have other places also, like Pamir in the north and in the south [read west], Barmir, Ajmir, Jaisalmir etc. where we do find mountains and not valleys from which water was drained by the sages"[21]. It is in place to recall that the local population does not accept Kasmira or Kashmir as the name of the Valley and instead call it, since ages, as *Kasheer*, their language as *Koshur* and themselves as *Kaeshir*.

As about the origin of the Valley, there are conflicting views about the early dwellers of Kashmir and their language. The *Satisar* theorists believe that the early people living in the Valley were the Nagas who were the natives of the land or who originated in the Valley and that the Kashmiri language is an offshoot of the Sanskrit. However, both these premises have been put to question. While Kashmiri belongs to the Dardic and not to the Sanskrit origin, the view that the Nagas were the original inhabitants of the Valley too does not stand the anthropological test. George Abraham Grierson's researches "prove that Kashmiri language belongs to the Dardic, and not to the Sanskrit group"[22]. He considered the Dardic languages to be a sub-family of the Aryan languages, "neither of Indian nor of Iranian origin but (forming) a third branch of the Aryan stock, which separated from the parent stem after branching forth from the original of the Indian languages, but before the Iranian languages had developed all their peculiar characteristics"[23]. Swati Kumar Chatterji holds that the spirit of the Dardic phonetics and morphology is different from that of Sanskritic

Indo-Aryan and their history as backward forms of patois is also different[24].

Kashmiri language

Historically, Kashmiri is one of the oldest languages of the world although heavily influenced by other languages, like Sanskrit and Persian which came into contact with it. The two have been the languages of the ruling class in Kashmir and thus remained dominant and influenced the word fund of Kashmiri, the language of the ruled class. However, to assume on the basis of its vocabulary that a language has originated from a particular language is not correct. "The unique structure, syntax and phonology has to be taken into account while tracing the history of a language"[25]. In the case of Kashmiri, the assumption that the language has originated from Sanskrit is based on "loan items of that language in the lexicon of Kashmiri language"[26]. On this analogy, however, it would be difficult to reject the premise that Kashmiri is not derived from Persian since bulk of modern Kashmiri words have been loaned from it.

About the Nagas, the so-called aboriginals of Kashmir and their language, a new view has emerged on the basis of the history of the Kashmiri language, peculiar characteristics of Kashmiri phonology, morphology and word order. According to this view, Kashmiri language is "an independent branch of languages right from the beginning"[27] and due to its close relation to the Indo-European languages group, it was "influenced by Sanskrit as Kashmir was a cradle of the Sanskrit language in the past"[28]. Afaq Aziz traces the Austric routes in the Kashmiri language and claims the former to have been the language of the Nagas. "There is no anthropological or any other evidence of the Naga race originating in Kashmir. Actually the Nagas originated in South Mongolia and eastern Turkistan wherefrom they migrated and spread all over India including Kashmir. In so far as the comparative linguistic elements of the Austric and the Kashmiri languages are concerned, there is no hesitation in accepting the view point that the Nagas of Kashmir were the outsiders whose language was known as the Austric"[29].

Aziz cites a host of names the meaning and the pronunciation of whose is the same in both the languages and concludes that "a number of words in the shape of verbs, adjectives, nouns and other grammatical shapes are of Austric origin in Kashmiri language"[30] and that "Kashmir was once the home of Austric language when it was populated by the Nagas"[31]. The premise negates the argument that Kashmiri is a sub-language of the Sanskrit and probably also any other hypothesis based on this argument.

Geographical position

The Valley of Kashmir is oval shaped and sits at an average altitude of 6000 feet within a ring of high mountains. It is about 135 kilometers in length and 32 to 40 kilometers in width[32]. Geographically, it is divided into two parts - the elevated plateaus of alluvial or lacustrine material known as *karewas* and a plain of low level alluvium or the river alluvium. The *karewas*, locally known as *wudar* are fan-like projections with flat arid tops, bare of trees, running towards the Valley. These are either attached to the mountains or isolated and present a sterile appearance. The *karewas*, divided from each other by ravines, 100 to 300 feet deep,[33] are of two types, namely, the flat topped *karewas* or Table Land and the sloping *karewas*.

The river basin or the plain comprises the low-level alluvium brought down by the Jhelum and its tributaries. The width of this plain varies from 5 kilometers to 25 kilometers[34]. This is the fertile area of the Valley stretching from Anantnag in the southeast to Baramulla in the northwest. North of Anantnag, the plain area is somewhat narrow and its width is about 20 kilometers[35]. This width is broadened beyond the Srinagar city. The lower areas have swamps which are filled with water in spring and summer. The plain or the river alluvium is the gift of the Jhelum. "If Egypt be the gift of the Nile, it is truer that Kashmir is the gift of the Jhelum"[36]. "There is no other instance of a valley of the dimensions of Kashmir, and at an altitude of five thousand feet above sea level, having a broad river intersecting it for so long a distance"[37].

The Jhelum is an imposing feature on the landscape of Kashmir. The river not only adds to the beauty of the Valley but sustains it as well.

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Ba hasrat-e-dil guft ki Kashmir digar haich.

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Man ki khurdam aash-e-jau Yarab ba Kashmiran rasan.

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Man Khuda ra deedam einja behijab.

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Hamin ast-o-hamin ast-o-hamin ast.
(If there is a paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here).

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MYTH AND MYTHOLOGY

Among the physical factors which make Kashmir 'The Paradise on Earth', the Jhelum, its main river, has played the lead role. Like all major rivers upon whose banks great civilizations were born, it has shaped the lives of the people and enriched their economy, besides upgrading the landscape along its course. More than a river, the Jhelum is a strong symbol of the land of its origin, deep rooted in the ethos of its people. As a bosom friend, it has given them moments of happiness and occasions of despair, and shared their agonies and ecstasies. It is a witness to their rise and fall, to their glory and struggle. The river is intricately linked with all aspects of Kashmir and is as much a part of its mythology as of history, culture, economy and social life.

Birth of the Jhelum

The birth of the Jhelum is connected with the origin of the Kashmir Valley itself which, according to geologists, started emerging as land like rest of the Himalayan mountain range, out of the Tethys Ocean, after collision of the Indian plate with the Asian plate some 50 million years ago[1]. With continued collision, there developed a large depression at the beginning of Pliocene epoch nearly 4 million years ago. Soon, this depression started getting filled with water as a result of drainage impoundment. At this point in time, the Kashmir intermontane depression assumed the status of a large inland lake. The lake or lacustrine conditions attained greater depth when its western margin, the Pir Panjal Range, rose to its present height due to tectonic reactivation about 25,000 years ago. Concurrent with this, the Baramulla gorge opened and the entire lake water got drained, restoring the Valley to terrestrial conditions once again. The river Jhelum which became oriented towards the northwest, carried out uneven erosion of the emerged lake deposits due to which the present day lakes (Dal, Anchar, Wular) and swamps were formed.

The scientific explanation apart, there is a legend, based on Hindu mythology, woven around the emergence of the Kashmir Valley to explain the river's taking form out of a vast lake known as *Satisar*. The mythological account, related in the *Nilmata Purana*, has it that the *Satisar* was inhabited by a demon. Jalodbhava (water-born), who had obtained the boon of immortality in water[2]. The demon had created a crisis for the people dwelling on and beyond the shores of the lake by devouring them[3]. Around this time, a sage, Kashyapa, was on pilgrimage here. He came to know about the atrocities of Jalodbhava, went to the eternal world and narrated the tale of woes of the people to gods there. The gods, after having a battle with Jalodbhava, killed him by cutting off his head. The legend credits Ananta with the drainage of the *Satisar* due to which the Valley attained the landform[4].

When the whole water was drained, those who lived here were again in trouble, this time because of the absence of water. Kashyapa had to then plead with gods for a solution to this problem of the distressed people[5]. Shiva, a Hindu god, the legend goes on, was moved by the plight of the people and told his consort, Parvati, to take the form of a watercourse. She asked him to identify the place of her emergence from the subterranean world. Shiva pitched his *trishul* (trident) in the ground and there sprang a *vitasti* (span) of water[6] and the Vitasta (one of the many names of the Jhelum) was thus born.

Known by many names

The river is known by many names - Vitasta, Vyath, Bihat, Hydaspes and Jhelum - to different people depending on their language. The earliest of these, Vitasta, is its ritualistic and mythological name obtained from a legend as told in the *Nilmata Purana*. It is pertinent to recall that the *Nilmata* deals with the Hindu *tirthas* (sacred places), rituals and ceremonials of Kashmir as also with the legends of its origin and the myths relating to its 'original' inhabitants[7]. It also has been classified as a *mahatmya*, as one of its names is known to be *Kasmira Mahatmya*[8]. A *mahatmya* is a handbook for the priests of a particular *tirtha* intended to support the claims put forth on behalf of the holiness of the *tirtha* and the spiritual rewards promised for a visit to it[9]. Even if the *Nilmata* is deemed to be outside the realms of a *mahatmya*, as some Sanskrit scholars would insist, the fact remains that the text contains in its body some *mahatmyas* such as *Kaptesvara Mahatmya, Asramasvami Mahatmya* and, above all, *Vitasta Mahatmya* which is the source of the legend about the birth and the name of the river.

The *Nilmata*, as such, is strictly a religious text and in no case intended as a historical *account*. The text, written in the 6th or the 7th century AD,[10] after the demolition of the Buddhist culture and literature in Kashmir,[11] is essentially an account of religious beliefs subscribed to by the author. That this premise is correct is proven by the *Nilmata* itself. It enjoins upon the people to listen to the glorification of the river as a religious duty: "Having listened to the glorification of the Vitasta, one is freed from all sins, and having heard the whole of the *Nilmata*, one gets the merit of (the gift of) ten cows"[12]. It also tells us the tale as to how the Vitasta, after having been brought originally to Kashmir by Shiva, disappeared again several times on meeting with sinners of various descriptions. "Kasyapa's prayer", it goes on, "induced the divine stream each time to return to Kashmir and to flow forth from a fresh source"[13].

The *Rajatarangini*, authored by the 12th century chronicler and Sanskrit versifier, Kalhana, has only faithfully followed the *Nilmata* account and we have in his narrative a repetition of what we already know about the origin of the river through the *Nilmata*. The *Rajatarangini* is a mytho-poetical work of high calibre on history in which the author has used all his skills as a versifier with the result that one does not know how much of it is history and how much poetry. After the death of Kalhana, the text, unfortunately, seems to have fallen into the hands of those people who did not recognise its artistic excellence[14].

Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din believes that the process of "misinterpreting" the great creative work started with Jonaraj, the court historian of Zain-ul-Aabideen, and was carried through the centuries to our times when "Dr. Stein took upon himself the white man's burden of interpreting for us the writings of one of our own authors"[15]. Jonaraja's credibility as an honest historian is put to question by the simple fact that despite having seen, during his lifetime, three to four Muslim rulers, he does not even once use the word Muslim or *Musalman.* The misinterpretations changed the 'River of Kings', that *Rajatarangini* literally means, to the 'History of the Kings of Kashmir' as it is now believed to be[16]. The myths and stories woven around the history of Kashmir, both physical and political, were to accommodate particular religious beliefs within its ambit. Facts and fiction thus cocktailed were labeled as history. The conscious efforts, however, did not take care of contradictions. Accordingly, while the *Katha Sarit Sagar* refers to *Vitasta* as flowing in Ujjaini (Ujjain in central India), Kalhana identifies it as the river in Kashmir[17].

Vyath is argued to be a contraction of Vitasta. The argument flows from the premise that Kashmiri is a sub-language of Sanskrit, a hypothesis not established so far. The propounders of the Sanskrit connection argue that when a new language starts taking root at a place, the noun in most of the cases does not change, unless forced to, and as such, Vitasta itself is the local name for the river. It would, however, be in place to recall that the Kashmiri language is not of Sanskrit origin and, much as one would hold that Vyath is "the direct phonetic derivation of the ancient Sanskrit Vitasta",[18] the premise is open to question in the light of researches that establish that Kashmiri language belongs to the Dardic and not to the Sanskrit group.

Not a Kashmiri name

Notwithstanding the 'contraction theory', Vyath is not the Kashmiri name of the River of the Vale. In fact, and if some old Kashmiri phrases are any clue, the river, so closely linked with Kashmir and her people, does not have a local name of its own at all. Its' so-called Kashmiri name, Vyath, is in fact a common noun, meaning a river, that has stuck to the river as a proper noun due to its usage over the centuries.

There is no relationship between the words *Vitasta* and *Vyath* except perhaps their phonetic neighbourhood. The fact that *vyath* as a noun is also frequently used as plural in the Kashmiri language positively proves the point. The famous Kashmiri phrase, '*vyathe hokhan te henar grazen*' (rivers will dry up and sewers will roar) amply shows that *vyath* is the Kashmiri equivalent of the word river. The phrase indicates to the time, nearer the doomsday, when strange things would occur such as rivers will dry up and sewers will flow brimful. It also means that a time shall come when the intelligent people would be starving and the buffoons would reap a harvest of riches. It could be argued that the proper noun V*yath* was symbolically used here in the plural sense but in that case *henar* should also have been represented by a proper noun. A properly framed phrase would be like 'Zabarwans may vanish but the Dals will not' and not 'Zabarwans may vanish but the lakes will not'. We cannot use a proper noun for one and a common noun for the other.

Another phrase, commonly used to persuade a reluctant taker to accept an advice, also substantiates the plurality of the word *vyath*. In order to underscore the suitability of the advice, one says, ' *Yi az wanakh ti vyathan te baalan, yi pagah wanakh ti mei*' (What you say today may befall rivers and mountains but what you will say tomorrow, after acting upon the advice, may be my fate). In the countryside Kashmir, flowing water in a channel is called a *vyath* and any stream, besides its proper name, is also referred to as such. Thus it would not be uncommon to hear that '*Vyath* is in spate' when the person saying so would be actually referring to a local stream.

A corroborating instance could be quoted from the name of another stream, Sindh, which also means "the river". We have in Kashmir the largest tributary of the Jhelum known by this name. Again, another of the tributaries of the Jhelum, the Kishenganga, too is called Sindh. Kalhana refers to the stream by this name. Stein, his English interpreter argues, that "this designation is evidently taken from the mouth of the people who, as I ascertained on my visit to the Sarada tirtha and Sirhasila, know the river only as the Sind, i.e., the river"[19]. He further goes on, "By Sindhu can be meant only the Kishenganga which, as in Kalhana's days, is still locally known merely as 'Sind', 'the river'[20].

Common noun or proper noun?

It is usual in different languages that common nouns often become proper nouns with the passage of time. That is precisely what has happened with the common noun *vyath.* Same has happened with the famous Kashmir lake, the Dal. A Kashmiri refers to any waterlogged area as *dal.* "Y*ath ha chhu dal gomut*" (This has turned into a lake) is often said when pointing to a submerged area. If it was meant to be a symbolic use of a proper noun then Kashmiris had a larger symbol in the form of the Wular lake to convey the meaning. Hence, the hypothesis suggesting the contraction of Vitasta into Vyath is at best a far-fetched exercise in linguistics. Vitasta, in any case, is not a heavy word for a Kashmiri to pronounce freely so as to corrupt it to *vyath* that, in contrast, is heavier than the former.

It is interesting that the river which, as we will see later on, runs a total course of about 724 kilometers from its origin to its merger with another river, the Chenab, should be known as *Vitasta* or *Vyath* only for a length of 241 kilometers. Again, the fact that an overwhelming majority of the local population in Kashmir refers to it as *daryao* (river) cannot be lost sight of. Among the locals, only a microscopic minority, or a small group of writers, use the word *vyath* as the name of the river.

The question now arises as to how the word *vyath* got initiated as the name of the river?

Since the river in question is the main river in Kashmir, the word by frequent usage became synonymous with it and over a period of time came to stay as its name in the local language. The fact that apart from *vyath* there is no other equivalent word available in Kashmiri, corresponding to the word river, has also to be taken into consideration.

Interestingly, no chronicle mentions the river as Vyath. The Hindu chroniclers called it Vitasta while their Muslim counterparts spoke of it as *Bihat*. The noted Kashmiri historian, Hassan Khuihami, mentions it as *Bihat* and nowhere calls it as *Vyath*. The Mughals also knew the river as *Bihat*. The *Ain-i-Akbari* calls it so. Though Jahangir writes that "Veth means the Jhelam",[21] he does not say it is the Kashmiri name of the river. If he had meant to say so, as Alexander Rogers, the English translator of the '*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*', would like us to believe,[22] he would have said so without mincing words. He could have simply used the words "The *Bihat* is known as *Vyath* in Kashmiri" or "The locals call it *Vyath*". The words used by Jahangir do not necessarily convey this meaning. On the contrary, these mean that the word *vyath* is used for the *Bihat*, the river. Rogers is certainly influenced, though wrongly, by Walter Lawrence whom he quotes in a footnote as saying, "Veth is the Kashmiri name for Jhelam"[23]. Lawrence, in fact, writes, "It (Jhelum) is known to the Kashmiris as the Veth"[24]. Even if this is taken to mean what Rogers says it does, it is most likely that by the time Lawrence arrived in Kashmir in the fall of the 19th century, a common noun, *vyath*, had already crept into use as the proper noun for the river in the local language.

So far as the name Bihat is concerned, it could easily pass off as the corrupted form of Vyath or the *vice versa*. However, if the Biblical references are any clue, it may be a derivation of the Hebrew name Bethpoer, given to the present Bandipore town in north Kashmir by the Jewish settlers who are supposed to have come here after fleeing from the Middle East in ancient times. Aziz Kashmiri holds that Bethpoer literally means the place of gaping or opening[25]. It is pertinent that the river passes through a gap before entering the Wular lake in Bandipore tehsil. The river makes a semi-circular entry into the lake in the eastern side of the Bandipore tehsil before the velocity of its water vanishes in the lake.

The scene of its merger with the lake is even today quite visible from the heights of Bandipore town. Aziz refers to many places including Bethpoer, Abarim, Moab, Nebu and Pisgah which, according to him, are mentioned in the Bible. These villages, situated in or about Bandipore with the same or slightly corrupted forms of their names, are an indication that the Jews came to Kashmir and named the local places and other physical characters of the land in their own language. "So Moses, the servant of Lord, died there in the land of Moab, over against Beth-poer: but no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day",[26] says the Bible.

It, however, requires sustained research to conclusively establish that the Jews did actually come to Kashmir on the basis of which could be determined the possible relationship of the name Bihat with the Biblical place, Bethpoer.

One thing is certain that the river is known as Bihat in Persian chronicles and descriptions only. It can not be said whence the Persian authors and historians picked the name. In the absence of a convincing argument it is difficult to accept the contention that *Bihat* is the corrupted form of *Vyath*. Mir Abdul Aziz seems to have over-stretched his imagination while claiming that Bihat originates from the Urdu/Hindi word *behta* which means 'flowing'[27]. To suggest that an Urdu or a Hindi word is the root for a Persian name is, to say the least, indulging in linguistic gymnastics. The learned writer argues that the sounds *V* and *B* are interchangeable in Urdu, Hindi and Kashmiri but forgets that the river is known as Bihat in Persian and not in these three languages. The Persian has no difficulty in accepting the sounds *V* and *B*, as these are available in the language.

Another, though little known, name of the river is Hydaspes. It was named so by the Macedonians who accompanied Alexander on his invasion of India. Ptolmy mentions it as Bidaspes[28]. There is, however, no definite clue available to suggest the reason for christening the river as such.

Jhelum - the name

The most commonly used name of the river today is Jhelum. The credible Urdu dictionary, *Farhang-i-Aasfia*, describes the word as a noun meaning an armour worn by a soldier to protect his face[29] and it has been used as such in Urdu poetry. Famous poet, Mirza Soda, says thus :

Bin khod ek dam nahi rehta sar-e-hubab

Daale rahe hai moonh pe jhelum sang aabshar

(Like a water-bubble constantly wearing a helmet, the stone under a waterfall covers its face with an armour [of cascade of water]).

On the basis of this, it can be assumed that the river got its name (Jhelum) due to the cover of foam it wears when changing into rapids after leaving the Valley through the Baramulla gorge. Mir Abdul Aziz's contention that the word Jhelum is a combination of a Hindi word *jal* (water) and a common Kashmiri suffix, *hom*, for a place,[30] is unacceptable. By this analogy, every water body in Kashmir should have been named as the Jhelum. Incidentally, the suffix, *hom*, is used in Kashmir for a human settlement like Dudderhom, Beehom, Burzahom, Balhom, Humhom and so on and so forth, and not for rivers or streams.

It is, nonetheless, difficult to say for certain how and when the river came to be known by this name. However, the general belief is that it came to be called Jhelum after the city of the same name, founded by Alexander in memory of his battle-horse, Bucephala, who died here, and through which runs the course of the river in Pakistan. According to Dr. G. M. D. Sufi, the name Jhelum is apparently of Muslim origin as Abu Raihan al-Biruni calls it Jailam, perhaps derived from *jihl* implying slowness, on the analogy of *kahil* or *al-hadi* for the Pacific[31]. Al-Biruni's time is about 150 years ahead of Kalhana. Srivara, a historian of Shahmiri period (AD 1346-1561) in Kashmir, when relating an expedition of Sultan Haider Shah into Punjab, refers to the river as Jyalami[32].

An interesting, yet far fetched, explanation of the name is offered by G. T. Vigne. According to him, the name Jhelum is derived from the two words, *jui*, a canal or watercourse in Kashmiri, and *lum*, a commonly used Tibetan word meaning 'a way' which could have easily crept into use in Kashmir[33]. He cites instances of community of names in Tibet and Kashmir like *Aha Thung*, *Haramuk* and *Hara Mosh*. *Thung* signifies an open space on a hill and the word is used in both, Tibet and Kashmir. *Haramuk* is the name of a large mountain in Kashmir and *Hara Mosh* in the north of Gilgit, according to Vigne, is evidently a compound of the same word[34]. While Vigne's explanation is again a far-fetched exercise in linguistics, the city of Jhelum seems to be a convincing connection with the name of the river.

The fact remains that outside the Valley the river is known as only Jhelum and within Kashmir too, in writing at least, it is today perhaps the single most used name. For 66 per cent of its total course, the river is known by this name alone. The ritualistic or the mythological name, *Vitasta*, given in Sanskrit texts, or the Kashmiri misnomer, *Vyath*, are the names given to too small a portion of its actual length to be generally accepted as the name of the river. The Jhelum, as we have seen earlier, flows beyond the Kashmir Valley through a distance three times larger than its total length within the Valley.

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BIRTH AND EVOLUTION

The Jhelum in the Valley is described as much of a drama. In geographical terms, it is not merely a river, it is a system. It constitutes with an umpteen number of tributaries, big and small, the drainage network of Kashmir which is the result of contrast in physio-graphic set-up and climatic conditions. The river is born to a famous south Kashmir spring, Verinag, at an altitude of 1860 meters, amid pine groves, in the lap of the Pir Panjal mountain. The mountain range is a great wall of rock, running up to peaks of over 4500 meters, and forms the boundary of the Kashmir Valley to the south and southwest. The Banihal Pass, at an altitude of 2805 meters, is the lowest depression in the chain of mountains, on the Kashmir side of which numerous valleys run parallel with the stripe of rocks.

The Verinag spring is situated 85 kilometers southeast of Srinagar. The spring was originally a shapeless pond where water, oozing out from different places in it, spread and formed a little marsh. It caught the eye of the Mughal emperor, Jahangir (AD 1606-27), who built an octagonal tank of well carved stones around it in AD 1612 and later, in 1619, laid out a fine garden in front of the spring with fountains, aqueducts and cascades and planted *chinars* (*Plantinus orientalis*) therein[1]. In AD 1627, Shah Jahan ordered extensions to the garden. Jahangir, the lover of nature as he was known to be, was so possessive of the place that he prayed with his dying breath to be taken to Verinag for burial there[2]. His contemporary, Francisco Pelsaert, a Dutch Protestant in the service of the Dutch East India Company, writes that

Verinag was "the most delightful pleasure resort where the King had the best hunting grounds in the whole of India"[3].

This famous tourist resort, attracting foreign and domestic tourists in large numbers, derives its name from the *pargana* (an administrative unit) of Ver, now known as Shahabad. The small amount of water from the spring of Verinag is joined by that of the Vyathvutur spring, situated about a kilometer and half in the northwest of Verinag. The Vyathvutur is identified by Stein, as the ancient Vitastatra where King Ashoka erected *stupas*[4] (pagodas). The spring is considered as the real source of the Jhelum for it lies some distance ahead of the Verinag spring.

Tributaries

From its source to its confluence with the Chenab in Pakistan, the Jhelum is joined by a host of tributaries, over a dozen of which are sizable. As it is required of the main source to be joined by a number of streams to make a river, the tiny stream issuing from the spring of Verinag becomes the Jhelum only when complemented by various torrents and rivulets on either banks along its course. Its tributaries include "fairly developed systems" of huge streams as well as tiny rivulets[5]. These are divided into two categories of the right bank and the left bank streams. The significant tributaries joining the Jhelum on its right bank include the Sandran, the Bringi, the Arapal, the Lidder, the Sindh and the Pohru. The Veshav, the Rembara, the Romshi, the Dudhganga, the Suran and the Kishenganga or the Neelam merge with the river on its left bank.

Among the right side tributaries, the Sandran originates below the Kakut peak in the Pir Panjal mountain[6]. The stream passes through a deeply carved channel, studded with boulders, to a point close to Verinag. From here, its bed is aligned parallel to that of the Jhelum. With its coming down to the plain, the Sandran is divided into many channels which subsequently unite to form the main stream. It runs a total course of 51 kilometers from the point of origin to its confluence with another stream, the Bringi. The catchment area of the Sandran is spread on 291 square kilometers[7]. The stream has an enduring flow in its lower stretch of about eight kilometers before its merger with the Bringi.

The Bringi also originates in the Pir Panjal and receives the snowmelt of a considerable area on the mountain in the vicinity of the Sandran. Consequent to the confluence of the streams of Anlan and Razparyin near the village of Wangom, the stream is known as Bringi. Downstream from here, it is complimented by the mountain torrent, Arapat Kol, with a small catchment area below the Niltup and Astanbal peaks in the Great Himalayan range. The Bringi then takes a west-northwest course and after flowing for some 25 kilometers, unites with the Sandran in the south of Anantnag[8]. The united waters of the Sandran, the Arapat and the Bringi make confluence with the Jhelum at Pushwara, a little distance above Khanabal. The Bringi is one of the leading trout streams of Kashmir dominated by Brown Trout[9].

The Lidder and the Sindh

The first major tributary of the Jhelum is the Lidder, meeting the river on its right bank at Sangam, between Khanabal and Gur, in south Kashmir. The Lidder is in fact bigger in volume than the Jhelum at the point of its merger with the latter. The stream rises at the base of the Kolahoi and the Sheshnag glaciers. It is formed by meeting of the two upper streams, the West and the East Lidder, at the famous south Kashmir health resort of Pahalgam. The western branch receives the highland torrent, Lidderwat, from Tarsar and runs down a distance of 30 kilometers before meeting the sister stream at Pahalgam[10]. The East Lidder takes birth in the snows of Sheshnag, an upland lake in the Kashmir Himalaya, and traverses a course of about 25 kilometers to form, with its western companion, the gorgeous Lidder[11]. The crystal blue stream, like its parental waters, then passes through a bewitching landscape overlooking by dense forests.

It is the most important and the longest trout stream in the Valley[12]. The width of the stream ranges from 70 to 90 feet and its total length is more than 80 kilometers[13]. The Lidder divides itself into many channels before merging with the

Jhelum. In its course from Pahalgam to the merging point at Sangam, the Lidder has a gradient of 538 meters[14].

Another right bank tributary of the Jhelum is the tiny stream, Arapal, receiving its water from the spring of the same name. It joins the Jhelum below Awantipore.

The Sindh is the mightiest of the tributaries of the Jhelum within the Valley. It rises below the lofty peaks of Zoji-la with a number of other feeding streams, from Amarnath, Kolhoi and Panjtarni, subsequently joining it. A river in its own right, the Sindh runs a course of about 100 kilometers before making a confluence with the Jhelum at Shadipore in north Kashmir[15]. It has a basin area of over 1556 square kilometers.

The cold blue water stream is no less than a crown on the head called the fabulous Sindh valley. It finds a mention in old histories as well. The chronicle on Akbar's empire, *Ain-e-Akbari*, calls the water of the stream as "wholesome to drink" and "so clear that the fish in it are visible"[16]. The considerable stream flows through a narrow channel at Sonamarg, an enchanting hill resort in north Kashmir. Downstream, near Dragti-yung, it receives, on its right bank, the stream called Wangat. The Sindh divides itself into many branches, one of which goes into the Anchar lake while the rest together empty themselves into the Jhelum. The gradient of the stream up to Kangan is about 50 meters in a kilometer and from Kangan to Shadipore, only 6 meters in a kilometer[17].

One of the leading trout inhabited streams of Kashmir, the Sindh passes through the villages of Sonamarg, Kulan, Rezan, Gund, Sumbal, Mammer, Cherwan, Margund, Prang, Wossan, Manigam, Woyil, Ganghama and Fatehpore before merging with the Jhelum. The confluence of the stream with the river at Shadipore is held sacred by the Hindus of the Valley (see Culture and History). The Sindh besides irrigating half of the cultivable area of the Srinagar district serves as a major drinking water source. The famous and thus far the biggest water supply plant in the Valley, Rangil Water Supply Plant, is fed by the stream. Presently, it feeds two hydroelectric stations at Sumbal and Ganderbal. The stream offers great potential for hydropower generation and various kinds of sports, the most common being angling and rafting.

A highly tortuous stream, the Pohru is one of the major tributaries of the Jhelum in the Valley originating in the north Kashmir range in Kupwara district. It consists of a number of streams like the Lolab, the Kahmil, the Talar and the Mawar. The Lolab has its source in Nagmarg and Bagalsar heights in the north of the Wular lake. It receives a stream, flowing from Kalarus, below Khumrial and takes a southwesterly bend to unite with the Pohru below Rainpura. The Lolab runs a course of 23 kilometers[18]. The valley of Lolab is one of the most fascinating valleys in Kashmir, "the water of whose springs is mercurial and whose whisper turns the morning-birds restless"[19].

The Kahmil, originating from the ridges between the Shamsbari in the west and Phishaitong in the north, also joins the Pohru at almost the same point where the Lolab makes a confluence with it. The Talar stream joins the Pohru above Handwara while the Mawar merges with it some 17 kilometers downstream at Kohanu. After the confluence with the Lolab, the Pohru flows for another 56 kilometers to join the Jhelum, on its right bank, at Doabgah. It flows through the villages of Kupwara, Drugmulla, Vodhpore and Kulgam and enters the Baramulla district near Sonawari. The gradient of the Pohru from Rainpura to Doabgah is 23 kilometers[20]. Downstream from here and close to the confluence, a meager stream, Viji, flowing from the peak of the same name, merges with the Jhelum while the Dakil, another small stream, joins the river five kilometers downstream.

A feeder canal joining the Jhelum on its right bank in the heart of Srinagar city is the Tsont Kol. It is an outlet of the Dal that drains the surplus water of the Lake into the Jhelum. The Tsont Kol is referred to in the *Rajataringini* as the *Mahasarit* [21]. It begins at Dalgate and flows through the localities of Kohnakhan, Bishambar Nagar, Barbar Shah and Gow Kadal where it falls into the Jhelum. The eastern end of the Tsont Kol is joined with the river through a sluice at Munshi Bagh.

Of the left bank tributaries, the Veshav originates in the southeastern end of the Kashmir Valley close to the source of the Jhelum itself. It drains the eastern face of the Pir Panjal and has a broad catchment area which "reduces the upper Jhelum to a tiny rivulet"[22]. In its initial stage, the Jhelum draws heavily on the feeders of the Veshav. The stream forms the famous waterfall of Ahrabal. The *Ain-e-Akbari* describes the Veshav as a stream "which issues picturesquely from an orifice in a mountain, and at the same place is a declivity down which the waters tumble from a height of 18 meters with a thundering roar"[23]. The chronicle relates an interesting, though horrible, practice according to which "Hindu devotees throw themselves down from its summit and with the utmost fortitude sacrifice their lives, in the belief that it is a means of securing their spiritual welfare"[24].

This fast moving stream also finds a mention in the *Rajatarangini* and the *Nilmata*. The latter describes it as an incarnation of Laksmi,[25] a Hindu goddess. The Veshav joins the Jhelum about 12 kilometers below Kulgam. One of its bifurcated branches goes further north to Naiyun to meet the Rembara. The fall of the Veshav is 2407 meters[26].

The Rembara is a snow fed stream that rises from the Rupri ridge of the Pir Panjal. Its main feeders originate from Rupri peak, the Bag Sar lake, the Pir Panjal and the Naba Pir passes. It divides itself into many channels. The stream flows through the villages of Hirapore, Padpavan, Chowgam, Shopian, Shirmal Lassipore, Litar, Batapore and finally merges with the Jhelum near Naiyun after travelling a distance of 60 kilometers[27]. The width of the stream is about 25 meters[28]. One of its bifurcated channels, Sasara, loses itself into the marshy land, west of Awantipore, before merging with the Jhelum. The total fall of the Rembara is 2466 meters[29].

The Romshi is yet another stream whose source is in the Pir Panjal. Its headstreams draw water from the peak of Kharmarg near Naba Pir pass. The stream flows through the villages of Pakharpore, Yachgose, Drabgam, Romu, Gossu, Newa, Puchoo and Kakapore where it finally merges with the Jhelum after traversing a course of about 51 kilometers[30]. The average gradient downstream from Pakharpore is 16 meters in a kilometer[31].

The Dudhganga, rising in the Pir Panjal below Tatakuti peak, ranks the first among the stream network of the Badgam district. It is joined by a number of *nallas* and turns muddy during rainy season. In the upper reaches, the stream has a high current due to which it is non-navigable except for a small portion in the plain area. The Dudhganga is joined by another stream, Shaliganga, near Ram Bagh. Subsequent to the merger, the stream flows into a swamp and thus a substantial amount of its water is diverted to the west into marshland. Traversing a course of 50 kilometers, the stream merges with the Jhelum near Shalteng[32].

The Dudhganga causes heavy losses to property during floods. The Flood Control Department has constructed a dyke near Bagh-i-Mehtab to avert such losses. Besides irrigating the rice fields along its course, the stream provides drinking water to a number of villages and uptown localities of Srinagar city. The average gradient of the stream is 63 meters in a kilometer[33].

The Kishenganga or the Neelam

The Kishenganga or the Neelam, as it is known beyond the Line of Control (LoC), and Suran or Poonch river, originating from southwestern slopes of Pirpanjal, are the major tributaries of the Jhelum and join the river outside the Valley of Kashmir. The Kishenganga flows through the northwest areas of Kupwara district from east to west. It passes through Keran and Teetwal in the bewitching Gurez valley and finally reaches Domel, a suburb 1.5 kilometers past Muzaffarabad town, where it joins the Jhelum. The confluence is described by Tyndale Biscoe as meeting of "the clear blue waters of the Kishen Ganga" with "the muddy brown stream of the Jhelum" [34]. The contrast in the colour of the waters of the two streams is visible for some distance before the former loses it to that of the latter. The Kishenganga is not navigable due to its fast flow and is used for floating down timber. It is a very cold stream and during summer "hundreds of people flock to its banks in the afternoon to escape the peak hours' oppressive heat"[35]. The ice-cold stream is rich in trout fish.

The Poonch is an important stream that flows into the Mangla Dam Lake. Before the construction of the Dam, it was a tributary of the Jhelum, merging with the river near Chomakh after passing near Kotli[36]. It rises from the Pir Panjal range and passes through Poonch city. Before partition, a small hydroelectric station was built by harnessing waters of its tributary, Betyaar, which provided electricity to Poonch town. Its flow is perpetual and assumes great magnitude during floods.

Apart from the tributaries directly flowing into the Jhelum at different points in its course, there are several other streams and rivulets like the Erin, the Madhumati and the Ningal which do not form junctions with the river but empty themselves into lakes or swamps connected with it and contribute in no less measure to its magnitude. The twin streams of the Erin and the Madhumati rise in the Haramukh mountain. While the former originates from the western flank of the mountain, the feeder streams of the latter are spread over a vast area between Nagmarg in the west and Sarbal nag in the east. The Erin runs a course of about 24 kilometers through beautiful landscape before falling into the Wular, south of Bandipore town. The stream is used for transport of timber. It has a steep gradient of 88 meters in a kilometer[37].

The Madhumati drains the northern slopes of the Haramukh precipice. After traversing a course of about 39 kilometers, it also falls into the Wular near Bandipore. The Madhumati like the Erin has a steep gradient, in fact steeper than the latter, with 103 meters in a kilometer[38].

The Ningal is a major stream that falls into the Wular. Its upper feeders rise in the Pir Panjal below Khan Pathri and Apharwat peaks near Khilanmarg. The stream flows in a northeasterly direction and after running a course of 38 kilometers, empties itself into the Wular[39].

After originating in south Kashmir and going through the process of evolution by embracing several small and major tributaries enroute, the Jhelum finally joins another river, the Chenab, at Trimmu in the Jhang district, 16 kilometers south of Maghiana in Pakistan[40]. The Chenab rises in the Himalayan canton of Lahul in the north Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, bordering Jammu and Kashmir, in two streams, Chandra and Bhaga. The united streams known as the Chenab, flow through the Pangi valley in the Chamba and then enter Padar, Kishtwar in Jammu region. The Chenab enters Pakistan at Khairi Rihal in Sialkot (Punjab) where the Tawi river joins it at once.

The combined waters of the Jhelum and the Chenab flow under the name of the latter till joined by the Ravi near Sidhu and the Sutlej at Madwala. Thence, the stream flows under the name of the Panjnad (five streams) to join the Indus, at Mithankot, which, in turn, ultimately falls into the Arabian Sea.

The Indus rises in the southwestern Tibet at an altitude of 18000 feet. It flows about 322 kilometers crossing the southeastern boundary of Jammu and Kashmir. After entering Pakistan, the river skirts around the Nanga Parbat massif in gorges as deep as 17000 feet and 20 to 25 kilometers wide. The Indus receives its most notable tributaries from the Punjab plains including the Jhelum, the Chenab, the Ravi, the Beas and the Sutlej. The jhelum and the Chenab together carry roughly the one-fourth of the total supply of the Indus River system.

End of the journey

From its origin to the end of its journey at Trimmu, the Jhelum runs a total course of 724 kilometers[41]. Of this, 241 kilometers are within the Kashmir Valley, 162 kilometers within the portion of the erstwhile united Jammu and Kashmir, now beyond the Line of Control and the major portion of 321 kilometers in Pakistan[42].

Within the Valley, the river passes through three stages during its run from the south to the north. In the first stage, from its origin to Khanabal, it is a narrow non-navigable watercourse. In the second stage, from Khanabal to Baramulla, the river, running through flat alluvial plains whose surface length is about 83 kilometers and a width ranging from 5 to 25 kilometers,[43] is slow and sluggish. The area is fertile, thanks to the river and its tributaries that bring along alluvium in bulk, particularly during heavy annual floods. The fall of the river from Khanabal (5400 feet altitude) to Srinagar is 165 feet and from Srinagar to Baramulla 55 feet[44]. Here, the Jhelum is compared to the Thames at Kew in breadth[45]. During its journey through this stage, the Jhelum runs a serpentine or meander course where its banks are mostly uneven with an average height, above the river water level, of a little less than 3 meters. However, during floods, the river over-runs its banks in most of the alluvial plains.

The third stage, beginning from the Baramulla gorge, changes the character of the Jhelum from a placid, slow and sluggish river to a roaring torrent. It takes a northwest course through the Valley in a "slow rushing gray green torrent, foam flecked, beaming in curly waves, its sound as eternal as the whisper of the wind through Pine and Fir and its force primeval in its untamed splendour"[46]. From the Baramulla gorge to Kohala, across the Line of Control, the Jhelum descends a deep incline of rocks and forms a continuous series of rapids like "those of St. Lawrence and the Danube, yet surpassing, not in volume but in majestic scenery those noble rivers"[47].

The Jhelum leaves the Valley with a total fall of 349.46 meters[48]. It has a sandy bed with an average depth of 3.4 meters. The average rate of flow of its water is 2-4 kilometers per hour. The total discharge of the river below Muzaffarabad is about 100 cubic meters per second[49] while at its point of entry into the plains (of Punjab) it is about 115 cubic meters per second[50]. Within the Valley, the river is so sinuous that for a road distance of 136 kilometers from Verinag to Baramulla, it has to cover a course of almost double the distance. Some of its loops have necks less than a kilometer across. In the limits of the Srinagar city, the waterway width and depth varies from 45 meters to 180 meters and 1 meter to 7 meters, respectively[51]. The sharpest bend within the city stretch has a radius of 150 meters. The bed material of the river in the city consists essentially of sand, silt and clay. No rocks are found up to the depth of 20 meters[52]. The catchment area of the river is 12,570 square kilometers[53].

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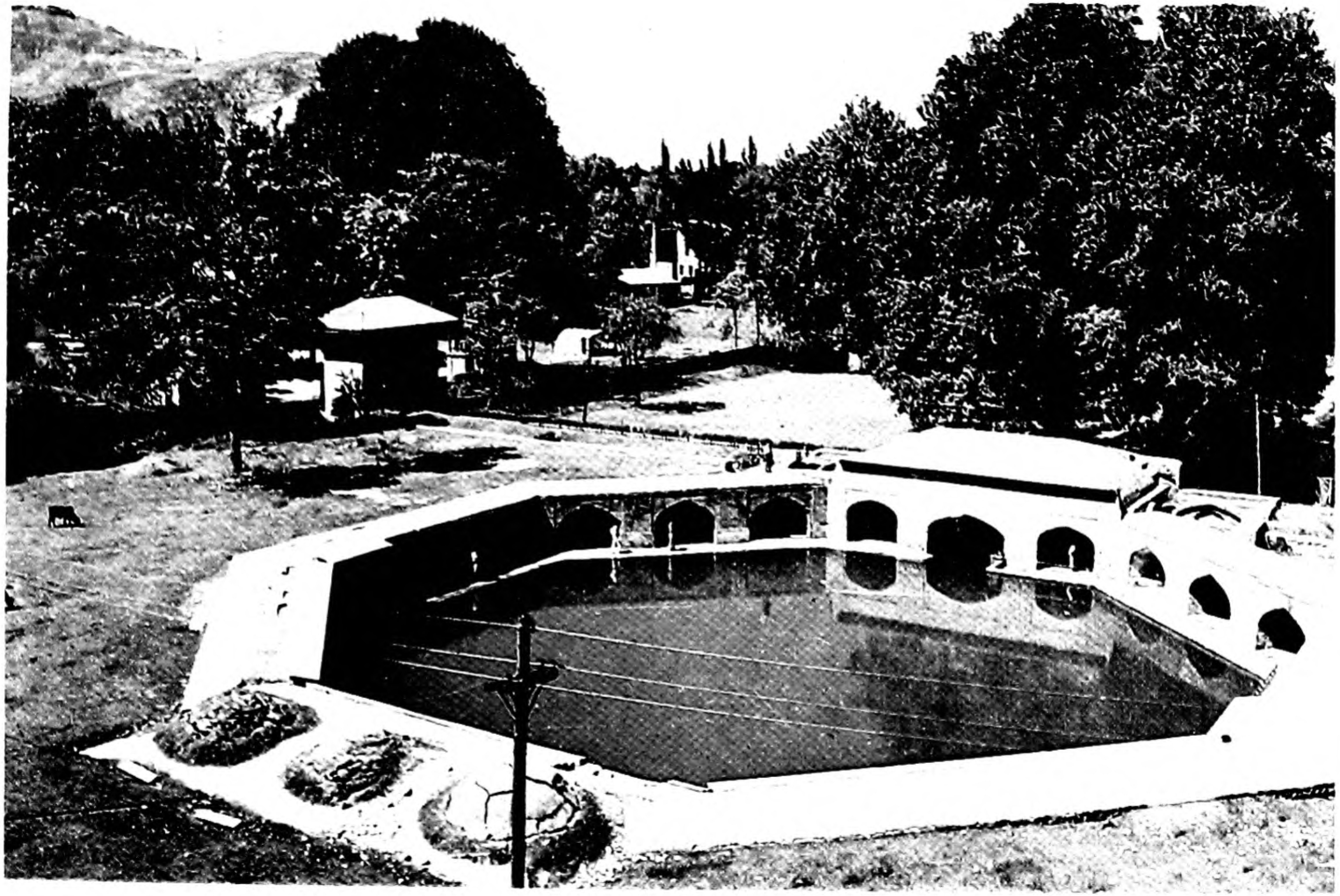
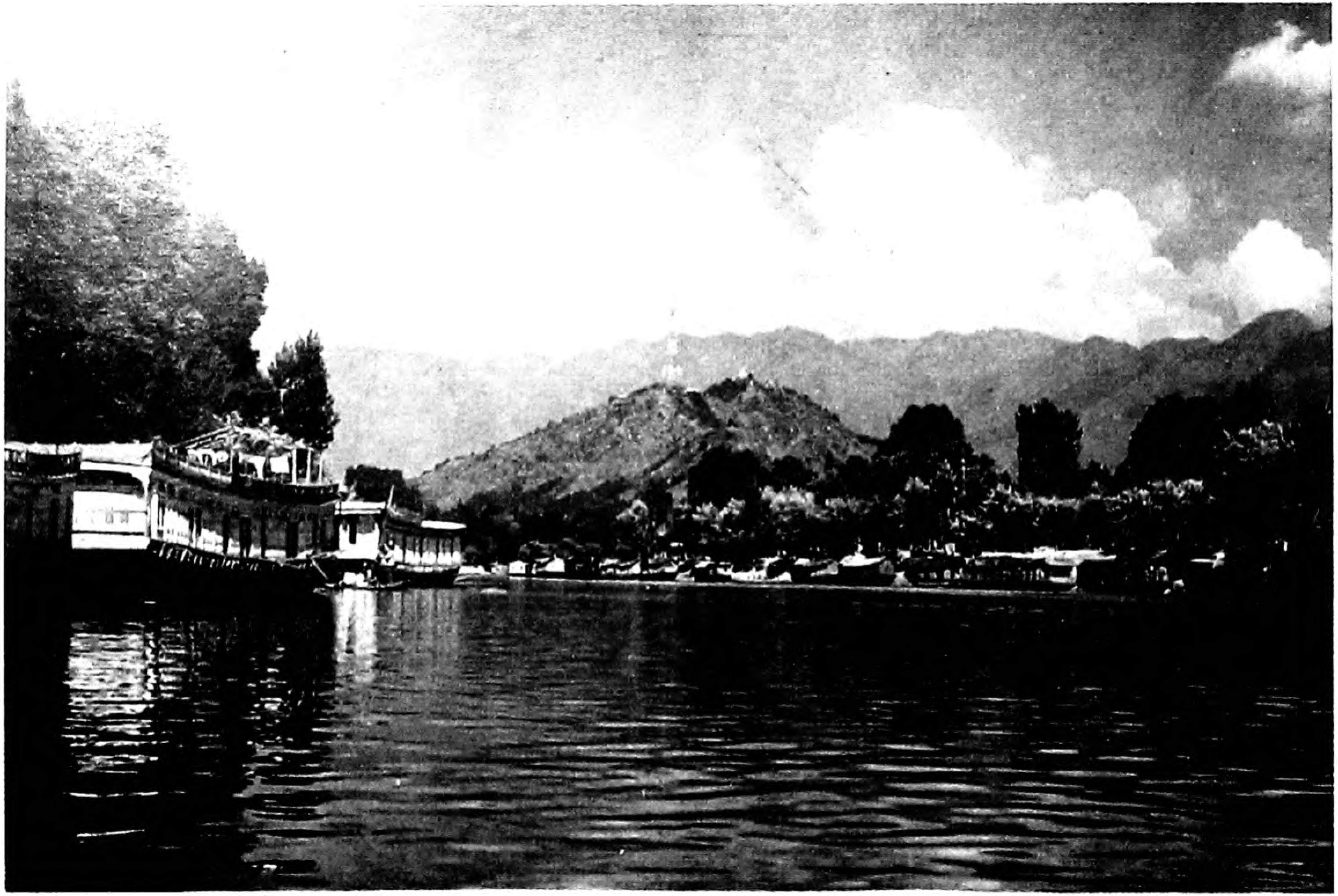


Verinag : The reputed source of the Jhelum at the foot of the Panjal mountains.



The Jhelum at Abiguzar in Srinagar with houseboats moored on either side of the river.

IN THE VALLEY AND BEYOND

The journey of the Jhelum in the Valley begins, after the hamlet of Verinag, through the twin villages of Dooru and Shahabad, the latter being the birthplace of the famous Kashmiri romantic poet, Rasul Mir, whom some equate to John Keats and who, like him, died at a very young age. The starting point of the Jhelum as, "a respectable river"[1], however, is Khanabal, close to the town of Islamabad which was re-christened in the Dogra rule (AD 1846-1947) as Anantnag. Margaret Cotter Morrison describes Khanabal as the *Ultima Thule* for upstream travellers on the Jhelum[2] as beyond that it is too narrow to navigate.

Anantnag, named by Emperor Aurangzeb (AD 1658-1707) as Islamabad after his governor, Islam Khan who laid out a garden for the Emperor here,[3] is the biggest south Kashmir town situated 55 kilometers in the southeast of Srinagar. The town is a part of the district of the same name, known as the 'Rice Bowl of Kashmir' for its rich rice fields. The Anantnag district has many breath-taking health resorts like Pahalgam, Acchabal, Kokernag, Daksum and Verinag.

At Khanabal, 50 kilometers from capital Srinagar, the Jhelum is joined by mountain streams from the south namely the Bringi and the Arpat. At Khanabal itself, the 294 km Srinagar-Jammu Highway takes a right turn before turning into a tortuous mountain road and an unnerving experience for any driver. Just below Khanabal, the Jhelum, on its right bank at Sangam (the confluence), receives one of its major tributaries, the Lidder, originating from the 'everlasting snows'[4] overhanging the head of the Lidder Valley.

Between Khanabal and Bijbihara, a famous old town, 47 km from Srinagar, the river is joined by the united waters of the Veshav and the Rembara streams. The town of Bijbihara is situated on either banks of the Jhelum. It is an ancient town believed to have been found by King Vijaya (BC 114-106). The settlement came to be known as Vijeshwar after the famous ancient temple of the same name which was later razed by Raja Kalash in AD 1080 when his father, Anant Dev, escaping his son's revolt, took refuge in the temple[5]. The fire destroyed the town also which is now known as Vejbror, believed to be a corruption of Vijeshwar.

The Mughal Prince, Dara Shikoh, laid out a Chinar Garden at Bijbihara in which at least one chinar is known to have attained the circumference of 56 feet. Kashmir has not produced any other tree of this girth during the 20th century though in the preceding one, Walter Lawrence, the then Settlement Commissioner of Kashmir, reported a giant chinar with a circumference of 63 feet in Lolab in north Kashmir.

Bijbihara is also known for the shrine of a famous 17th century saint-scholar, Baba Naseeb-ud-Din Gazi, who spent his life time in preaching Islam and visited various villages and remote areas of the Valley. Gazi is said to have constructed 1200 mosques[6] across Kashmir besides many community facilities. He wrote fourteen books on theology and other related matters[7]. Baba lies buried in the shrine on the left side of the Jhelum in the vicinity of the Jama Masjid of Bijbihara where, according to a belief, Lall Ded, the 14th century mystic poetess of Kashmir, is laid to rest. Noted Kashmiri poet, Abdul Ahad Nazim, is also buried here.

Through the ancient cities

After leaving the district of Anantnag, the Jhelum enters Pulwama, another of the six Kashmir districts, and flows through its many important towns. Of these, Awantipore, 28 km from Srinagar, is the ancient capital city of Raja Awantivarman (AD 853-83) and archaeologically a significant site. Here, the remains of the huge structures of Awanti Aishwar and Awanti Swami temples are still in place. The latter is popularly known as

Pandav lari (houses of the Pandavas) and is situated on the right bank of the Jhelum. The Awanti Swami and the Awanti Aishwar temples were built by the King before and after ascending the throne, respectively.

Situated here, on the right bank of the river itself, is also the tomb of a Muslim saint, Syed Hassan Mantaqi. His father had arrived in Kashmir in the reign of Sultan Sikander (AD 1389-1413). At the shrine, travellers, particularly Jammu bound ones, pay their obeisance and *niaz* (cash offerings). Adjacent to the temple ruins and opposite to the shrine, is situated the beautiful Jama Masjid with its domes commanding a grand view. Excavations at Awantipore have unearthed coins of both Hindu and Muslim period[8] signifying the prominence this area enjoyed in the past. Other notable places along the course of the Jhelum, through the district of Pulwama, are Letapore, Kakapore, and Pampore.

The town of Letapore, founded by the court architect of King Laltadita (AD 695-731) when the latter was away fighting wars of expansion, is a site of archaeological importance and also that of a state owned modern rice mill. Another major village, Kakapore, was founded on the left bank of the Jhelum in the 5th century BC[9]. In its vicinity, a mountain torrent, Romshi, embraces the Jhelum. Up to the Mughal period, Kakapore was a vast poppy field, the cultivation of which was banned by Emperor Aurangzeb[10].

Pampore is famous for the fields of saffron, an exotic flower, the stigma of which sells at Rs. 40,000 a kilogram. The town is also the birthplace of Lall Ded, prior to whom no traces of Kashmiri poetry are available. Pampore is also a place of reverence for the shrines of Muslim saints, Mir Mohammad Hamdani, the illustrious son of Mir Syed Ali Hamdani or *Amir-e-Kabir or Shah-i-Hamdan* as he is popularly known, and Nemat Ullah Shogbab Sahab. It has also earned a name, within the Valley, for *sheermal,* a crisp and tasty bakery cherished with *qahwa*, the local sweet tea.

Pampore is a fast developing town with small and medium industrial units being set up here. Recently, a 175 MWs Gas Turbine was set up here to augment the power supply to the Valley. A short-wave radio station and a joinery mill are also located in the town. Situated 13 kilometers upstream from Srinagar on the right bank of the river, the ancient name of the town is said to have been Padmapore after the name of Padma, a minister of the 9th century ruler of Kashmir, Jayapida, who founded the town[11].

After Pampore, the Jhelum enters the hamlet of Paand Chhok, known for its stone chiselling business, where the craftsmen are seen busy carving stone mortars, pestles, grinders, tomb stones and finely shaped corner stones for buildings. The stone is locally known as *divir ken*. The carved slabs of this stone are used as flooring in a *hamam*, a room kept warm during winter by burning wood in the space left hollow under the floor. This heating arrangement is also used in mosques in Kashmir where a certain portion serves as *hamam* during winter. The *hamam* was introduced in Kashmir by the Mughals. With the passage of time and the advent of modern architecture, the *hamam* in Kashmiri homes became a rarity. However, in view of the intense cold felt during winters in houses constructed in cement, people have again started making provision for *hamam* in their homes.

Next, the Jhelum touches Athwajan, where on its right bank, according to the common belief, rests the Nightingale of Kashmir. Habba Khatoon, the poetess queen of the last of the native sovereigns. Yusuf Shah Chak, who was deceitfully imprisoned by the Mughal ruler, Akbar, after having been invited by him to India. Akbar dispatched Yusuf to Bihar, a north Indian state, where he passed away yearning to return to his beloved motherland. The Mughal emperor nursed vengeance against the Chaks, for it was under their rule that Kashmiris had frustrated his earlier attempts to annex Kashmir. Writer and critic Mohammad Yusuf Taing claims to have discovered the grave of Habba Khatoon alongside that of her husband in Biswak, Bihar[12]. The claim, however, is yet to be entertained by the students of the history of Kashmir.

Habba is one of the few leading lights of romantic Kashmiri poetry of which the Valley has not produced many in females. Her inner turmoil, caused due to forced separation from her husband, gave her poetry the touch of unmatched woman sensibility.

Adjacent to the grave of Habba Khatoon at Athwajan, lies buried another legendary poet of Kashmir, Mehjoor, whose verses inspired and stimulated the political movement of Kashmir in the third and fourth decades of the 20th century. Mehjoor is the only poet of Kashmir to have become a legend in his lifetime. He was very popular among his people who knew him as the *Shair-i-Kashmir* (The Poet of Kashmir).

Close to the graves, on the right bank, is a huge stone quarry which supplies stones to a large part of the expanding capital city.

In 'The City of Plenty'

The Jhelum next enters the outskirts of Srinagar, the present capital city of Kashmir, at Pandrethan, another historical place founded as capital by Emperor Ashoka (BC 264-228)[13]. Stein identifies it with Kalhana's Purandhisthana. The identification, however, is disputed on many counts. For one, the locality surrounded by the river on one side and a mountain on the other, has a very small strip of flat land where not even a thousand houses could be built, not to speak of "96 lakhs of houses respledent with wealth"[14]. It is incredible that the locality could hold a population of thirty-eight million four hundred thousand even if only one couple with two children occupied each house. Even if the areas of present Badami Bagh, Sempore, Phrestabl, Khrew and Zewan were also included, it would not be possible to create such a city as huge as mentioned by Kalhana[15].

The city came to be known as Shrinagri, an amalgam of two Sanskrit words, *shri* or *sri* and *nagri*. While the former is a salutation prefixed to a noun to show its exalted status, the latter means a city. Together, the words would mean 'The Auspicious City' or 'The Beautiful City' or 'The City of Plenty'[16]. The prefix, *sri*, has no connection with the Sanskrit noun meaning the sun[17].

After Pandrethan, the Jhelum reaches Batwara, a hamlet on its right bank, opposite which lies the village of Lasjan, a low-lying area once famous for the large quantity of mats manufactured here. The area is today a site of many brick-kilns. Here are also large swamps used for diverting excess floodwaters in the Jhelum after breaching the left embankment of the river at Kandizal. Near here, at Padshahi Bagh, a Flood Spill Channel was constructed in AD 1903 on the left bank of the Jhelum to reduce the pressure of excess water in the river during floods. After crossing through many low-lying areas in the city, the channel rejoins the river at Gohal at Sonawari in the Baramulla district.

Downstream from Batwara, the Jhelum passes through Sonawar, the Civil Lines of Srinagar city. From Pandrethan to Sonawar is situated the Cantonment area with an army corps headquarters. The Cantonment was first established by the Dogras where army barracks were also used as prison cells to incarcerate political leaders who dared to rise against the Dogra rule. On the right bank of the Jhelum at Sonawar are situated Government guest houses, official residences of senior bureaucrats, Circuit House, Amar Singh Club, Cricket Stadium, Protestant Church, Christian Missionary School, tomb of a Muslim saint, Syed Yaqoob, office of the United Nations Military Observers Group and, at a little distance downstream, the radio and television stations. The area has also large groves of magnificent *Chinars*. Here, the Jhelum is linked with the Dal through the Tsont Kol, a canal which receives the surplus water of the lake.

The Dal

The Dal is one of the best known tourist spots of Kashmir. It is in the northern-eastern side of Srinagar. The lake has been sung by Thomas Moore in his celebrated poem, *Lalla Rukh*.[18] and admired by Walter Lawrence as "the Lake par-excellence"[19]. To Biscoe, it was always difficult to "tear oneself away from that glorious view"[20]. Alas! today this aquatic splendour is fast degrading into an environmental nuisance, thanks to our own doing.

Vandalism with the lake has shown its results. In the span of less than 50 years, the Dal has shrunk from 48 square kilometers to a mere 15.42 square kilometers[21]. Illegal and indiscriminate encroachment, increased agricultural activities on its floating gardens which are mushrooming by the day, land reclamation, massive construction in and around the lake and increased inflow of pollutants and contaminants have played havoc with the Dal.

The single largest contributing factor to its fast decay is considered the closure, in 1970s, of the Mar canal, the serpentine outlet of the lake which worked as its respiratory system. The canal was converted into a metallic circular road. The Government awakened rather late and not before a lot of damage was done to the Dal. The Dal Development Board and the Dal Development Project, initiated to save and restore the lake to its prestine glory, have not served the desired purpose and the Lake continues to die a slow death. The State Government has announced a Rs. 319 crore project to cleanse the lake. The Central Government has already approved in principle the conservation of the lake on priority within the National Lake Conservation Project and a sum of Rs. 87.10 crores has been committed for this purpose[22].

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests shall monitor the eco-restoration in the Dal through acquisition of land and structures from the people living in the lake with proprietary rights. The efforts of the Government would, however, not be sufficient to save the Dal unless people in general shoulder the responsibility to clean and preserve the lake about which a 19th century European wrote, "Perhaps in the whole world there is no corner so pleasant as the Dal Lake"[23].

Takht-e-Sulieman

At Sonawar, landmarked by the *Takht-e-Sulieman* (Solomon's Throne), now known as Shankaracharya hill which is adorned by an ancient temple and a modern television tower, the Jhelum is known to have entered the city of Srinagar. The Shankaracharya hill is 1100 feet high with an altitude of 6240 feet. A winding motorable road was built in 1972 along with the construction of the television tower atop the hill which commands a magnificent view of Srinagar, the seat of power in Kashmir and the summer capital of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Situated at an altitude of 5200 feet, the city of Srinagar includes the areas of Pandrethan, Praverpora, Nowshehra, Ala-ud-Din Pora and Naagar Nagar founded as capital cities by Ashoka, Praversen, Zain-ul-Abideen, Ala-ud-Din and Akbar, respectively at different times. The city has been known by many names. The Mughals called it *Kasheer* by the name of the whole province, while in the Dogra dispensation it was referred to as *shehar-i-khas* (the main city). People, however, prefer to call it simply as *shehar* (city). A ruralite, bound for Srinagar, still prefers to say that he is going to *shehar*. The total area of the city is about 84 square kilometers with a population of about a million. The city is the most important constituent of the district of the same name and a place of great political and social significance.

Srinagar has the distinction of being the capital and the principal city of Kashmir from times immemorial. To the 11th century Kashmiri born Sanskrit poet, Bilhana, it was "not only the principal city of Kashmir but excelled over all other cities"[24]. Abul Fazl found it "a great city and has long been peopled"[25]. The city has survived many upheavals, calamities and changes of rulers. "Its alliance or opposition almost always proved decisive factor in determining the fortunes of war"[26]. Attempts by kings like Laltadita, Jayapida and Awantivarman to shift the capital from Srinagar to Parihaspore, Jayapore and Awantipore, respectively did not succeed. These temporary capitals speedily sank into the ocean of ignominy. The cities are today found only in history or in ruins.

The failure of these attempts is attributed to the central, commercial, political and cultural importance of Srinagar. The city is of great antiquity and the hub around which revolved the wheel of Kashmir's social, cultural, economic and political life. It has always been an attraction for all kinds of people - warriors, travellers, mystics, preachers, historians and tourists. The kings have fought heavy battles here to gain or retain control over the Valley, travellers and tourists make a bee-line to see the 'Jewel in the Crown of Kashmir', mystics have found the place in tune with their spiritual urges and historians wrote celebrated chronicles here.

Downstream from Sonawar, for a kilometre or two, the banks of the Jhelum are dotted, on either side, with buildings of great historical and cultural value. On the right bank are the Srinagar Club, the Emporium Gardens where the gorgeous looking 105 year old Emporium building was gutted in the wee hours of May 26, 1998, the Tourist Reception Centre, the General Post Office, the Bund known then as the European Quarters and missionary schools for boys and girls. The Polo Ground, once used by Maharaja Hari Singh to play polo, is also situated here and is now an open field. A football ground and a gymnasium have been laid out here where children are seen playing different games including cricket.

A short distance downstream from here, is the famous Lal Chowk, a place of great historical importance and a witness to many events of far-reaching political implications. About here, on the right bank of the river, is located the lower courts complex, which earlier also housed the State High Court, and the Christian cemetery where, besides others, lies buried Robert Thorp who was killed in AD 1867 for espousing the cause of the oppressed Kashmiris.

Thorp, like many of his fellow Britishers, had come to Kashmir to shoot big game but was shocked to witness the plight of local Muslim population at the hands of their Hindu ruler and his co-religionist officials. He collected information about the persecution of the people and highlighted it by sending it to the Indian Government and newspapers back in England. This earned him the wrath of the rulers. He was ordered out, tied to his bed and carried towards the pass by sepoys but managed his escape and returned, only to die of poison after his breakfast next morning[27].

The treasure-trove

On the left bank of the Jhelum is a missionary girls high school and, beyond it, one of the first few planned residential colonies of Kashmir. A little distance further downstream on the left bank is located the treasure-trove of the Valley, the S. P. S. Museum, established in AD 1898 initially with the gifts in the state *Toshkhana* and subsequently developed into a rare collection of art, archaeological treasures, paintings, textiles, natural history, anthropology, numismatics, manuscripts and old armoury. Among the prized possessions of the museum is a copy of the holy Quran, calligraphed by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. There is also a Persian text of *Ramayan,* a Hindu epic. The numismatics section has coins from the Kushan period to the Dogra rule. The Government in Kashmir had announced its decision to shift the museum to Hari Niwas building at the foot of the Beswan hills which, however, awaits implementation.

Close to the museum is situated another cultural landmark, the Academy of Art, Culture and Languages that has, over the years, salvaged from the rubble of ignominy, the many distinguished facets of Kashmir's identity in art, literature and culture. The Academy is a rich repository of Kashmir's singularity in various fields of art and culture. Among the splendid collections of the Academy is a copy of the holy Quran calligraphed by Fateh Ullah Kashmiri in AD 1237, long before the formal advent of Islam in Kashmir. It brings to light the fact that Muslims were present in the Valley before the arrival of the Muslim preachers from Central Asia and the subsequent *en masse* conversion of the local population in the 14th century AD.

Another copy of the holy book, calligraphed in saffron ink, dates back to AD 1594. Yet another copy of the Quran is calligraphed in AD 1711 in golden ink.

The main building of the Academy was gutted in a fire during the intervening night of June 10 and 11, 1999. Some newspaper reports suggested that valuable manuscripts were lost to the fire but the Government asserted that only administrative record was destroyed. Lovers of art and culture of Kashmir had been for long demanding scientific strong rooms for the prized collections.

The Valley's only women and children hospitals are also located here on the left bank of the Jhelum.

The river here takes a sharp turn to flow in the south-north direction and marches through Maisuma, a prominent locality on its right bank.

Maisuma, previously encompassing the whole island between the Jhelum and the Tsont Kol, the area which is today the nerve centre of Srinagar city, is the venue where the Afghans lost their supremacy over Kashmir to the Sikhs and it was here in AD 1846 that the Kashmiri Resistance Forces killed the Dogra minister Lakhpat Rai and defeated Gulab Singh's troops when they tried to establish their rule in Kashmir following the infamous Treaty of Amritsar under which the British handed down to Gulab Singh the Valley, together with its inhabitants, in lieu of Rs. 75 lakhs. The legendary Subhan Naevid, who fought a relentless battle against flesh trade in Kashmir, belonged to this place.

Subhan's fight against flesh trade

Subhan was a great son of the soil whose love for his motherland and her people was immeasurable. He was born in a barber family in 1910[28] when Kashmir was under the bondage of the Dogras. The autocratic administration did not only take an economic toll of the people but plundered social values as well. Kashmir had become a pleasure ground for the ruling elite who would indulge in all types of vices. Prostitution was officially encouraged. The two Dogra rulers, Gulab Singh and Pratap Singh, patronized *nautch* girls and the State levied taxes on prostitutes and pimps. The revenue thus collected was officially recorded. Thanks to the official blessings, moral turpitude was so rampant that in the city of Srinagar alone, there were as many as 20,000 prostitutes in AD 1880[29] exposing the Kashmiri society to great risks.

It was in this background that Subhan took upon himself to cleanse the society and rid it of the vice of flesh trade. Although an illetrate, he was more emanicipated than the most so called 'emanicipated citizens'. At a tender age of 14, he launched a crusade against prostitution, published a pamphlet exposing the nexus between government officials and the flesh traders, went from door to door to educate people about the repercussions of the expanding flesh trade and held discussions with the respectable citizens urging them to rise against it. He would also lead a group of youngsters to picket at the enterances of brothels and sing songs against pimps, prostitutes and their clientele to chide them away[30]. Subhan's fight against the evil was not an easy one. He met with all types of resistence and threats. He was charged with creating law and order situation, causing loss to governmnet revenue, maligning the 'respectable' citizens and inciting people against the Dogra ruler. Witnesses were fabricated against him and he had to sell all that he possessed to meet the litigation charges. He also lost his job as a barber to the Maharaja's state band. Subhan withstood all this and more and was successful in building strong public opinion against the immoral traffic, forcing the rulers to ban prostitution through a piece of legislation in 1934[31].

Opposite Maisuma, on the left bank, are situated the Hanuman Temple and the historic Shergarhi Fort. The latter was constructed in AD 1770 by the Afghan governor, Amir Khan Jawan Sher. The Dogras changed its name to Nursing Garh which, however, could not gain currency. The building, serving as the bicameral state legislature complex after 1957, was gutted in a huge fire on October 9, 1980. A wooden structure was later raised in its garden to serve as the lower house of the legislature. The Dogras repaired the fort and added many buildings in its vicinity. The Gadadar Temple, built by Gulab Singh on the river bank here, has a golden *kalash* (dome). Two thousand *tolas* of gold were used for plating of the dome. The maintenance of the temple was met through levy on farmers at the rate of a quarter *seer* per *kharwar* of produce[32]. It is said that the temple had a good collection of golden offerings and idols of this precious metal which the ruling family carried with itself when it fled from Kashmir on October 26, 1947 in the wake of the tribal attack on the Valley.

The Old Secretariat, housing a large number of Government offices including the Archaeological Department, is located here. About here, between the Old Secretariat and the Kashmir Divisional Commissioner's office on the left bank itself, a canal, Keta Kol, flows from the Jhelum and runs in two branches through the interior city. One branch, flowing through the SMHS Hospital boundary wall, rejoins the river at Safa Kadal while the other, known as Sonar Kol, running through Nawab Bazar, embraces the Jhelum near Chattabal. The Sonar Kol receives 40 to 50 percent of the total flood discharge of the Kata Kol[33].

The old city

The Jhelum here-onwards rips through the old city of Srinagar, a hub of activity for different tradesmen and craftsmen dwelling on either side of the river. The most densely populated parts of the city are located close to the river banks. The old city shot into prominence during the Muslim rule as a major business and political centre of Kashmir, a glory that was snatched from it in later years. During the Sikh and the Dogra rule, the old city lost all its grandeur. A European official, who was here in AD 1847, presented a very sad picture of the city with houses "tumbling from every direction", streets filthy "from want of drainage" and none of the *bazaars* "well-filled and prosperous"[14].

The clusters of houses on the banks of the Jhelum in the old city are divided into numerous localities, known as *mohallas*, of which the prominent ones on the right bank below Maisuma, are Ganpatyar, Habba Kadal, Fateh Kadal and Khanqah. At Ganpatyar, there is an old Hindu temple by the same name on the river bank the deity of which is said to have been installed by none other than Sultan Sikander - maligned as one who destroyed Hindu temples. The original builder of this very old temple is not known. Gulab Singh, the founder of Dogra rule in Kashmir, reconstructed it in AD 1854. Some distance downstream from here, on the left bank at Dal Hassanyar, is situated the Ragunath temple built by Dogra ruler, Ranbir Singh, in AD 1875. It is also known as Ranbirswami temple.

Khanqah-e-Moalla

After Habba Kadal and Fateh Kadal, the two prominent localities situated on the banks of the Jhelum, the river reaches Khanqah, wherein stands one of the most sacred shrines of Kashmir, Khanqah-e-Moalla, constructed by Sultan Sikander in memory of the great Muslim preacher from Central Asia, Mir Syed Ali Hamdani. His teachings inspired large scale conversion of local Hindus to Islam including that of Shahpur, the chief priest of a nearby temple who was later named Shah Mohammad[15]. His conversion took place after he is believed to have had a spiritual fight with Mir Syed Ali in which he was defeated. Mir Syed Ali is popularly known as *Amir-e-Kabir* (The Great Leader) and *Shah-i-Hamdan*, literally meaning 'the Monarch of Hamdan', his birth place.

When *Shah-i-Hamdan* arrived in Kashmir, he stayed here and the then ruler, Sultan Qutub-ud-Din, constructed a stone platform for the spiritual seer to pray and meditate[36]. Later, his illustrious son, Mir Mohammad Hamdani, came to Kashmir in AD 1392 and also stayed here. Sultan Sikander, who was then the ruler of Kashmir, after obtaining permission from Mir Mohammad, constructed the *Khanqah*. The shrine was originally a single storey construction completed in AD 1394[37]. It was gutted in devastating fires in AD 1480 and 1731.

The *Khanqah* is one of the most revered shrines of Kashmiri Muslims where people daily throng to offer *nimaz* and congregate in thousands on the annual festival held on the 6th of *Zilhaj*, the last month of the Muslim calendar. The shrine is a religious centre of great significance from where spread the light of Islam throughout the Valley. There are some relics of historical value in the shrine including the *Khat-e-Irshad*, a spiritual decree issued by Mir Mohammad Hamdani in favour of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din or *Sheikh-ul-Alam*, the patron saint of Kashmir. The decree is written in Arabic on the skin of a stag.

Another historical document is the sale deed of the land for the shrine executed between Mir Mohammad Hamdani and Sultan Sikander. The wooden building of the two-storeyed shrine is of typical Kashmiri *ziarat* style. Quranic verses and those of the *Aurad-e-Fateha*, collection of prayers in Arabic compiled by *Shah-e-Hamdan*, are inscribed on the walls in golden ink. Within the premises of the shrine is a platform on which the Kashmiris for the first time made the demand for the freedom of press and speech during the Dogra rule in April 1931[38].

After crossing the Khanqah-e-Moalla, the Jhelum reaches the architectural marvel of the Shahmiri period, the *Badshuhun dumath*, the tomb of the mother of Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen (AD 1420-70), a famous ruler popularly known as *Badshah* (the great king). The brick structure of a distinct architectural individuality with no parallel in or around Kashmir, has about it the *Mazar-e-Salateen* (burial ground of the kings) where great sons of the soil, including Zain-ul-Abideen and his father, Sultan Sikander, lie buried. Mirza Hyder Doghlat, the 16th century king-maker of Kashmir, is also laid to rest here. Dughlat is accused of having flared up sectarian discord between two sects of Kashmiri Muslims - the *Sunnies* and the *Shias*.

The grave of Sultan Habib (AD 1561-65) of Shahmiri dynasty too is situated here. The crystal glass tomb-stone of Zain-ul-Aabideen's grave was surreptitiously removed on the instructions of Gulab Singh, the founder of Dogra rule in Kashmir[39].

The place is also known for the trade centre, Maharaj Ganj, where the Dogra rulers settled non-local businessmen to wrest the trade from the native tradesmen after banning the Friday market at Jama Masjid established during the reign of Sultan Sikander[40].

First Muslim ruler

Further downstream, on the right bank, are the mausoleums of Muslim saints, Syed Mohammad Amin Mantaqi Baihaqi or Woosi (Owaisi) Sahab and 'Sharf-ud-Din' Syed Abdur Rehman popularly known as Bulbul Shah. Woosi Sahab was a saint of high order and a good poet of Persian language. He was adopted as a son by Sultan Zain-ul-Aabideen. Syed Abdur Rehman is considered the initiator of Islam in Kashmir. He solemnised the conversion of Buddhist Rinchen to Sadr-ud-Din, the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir (AD 1320-23). Bulbul Shah came to Kashmir during the reign of Seh Dev (AD 1301-19).

The mausoleum of Bulbul Shah was constructed by Rinchen for his spiritual guide who led him to a new faith. The place has the distinction of being the first Muslim shrine in Kashmir. A *langar* (community kitchen) was also started here upon which the area came to be known as Bulbul Langar. It is still known by this name, though with a minor distortion of Lankar instead of Langar. The *langar* was opened by Bulbul Shah for the new converts who had been declared social outcasts by their families and relatives for 'deserting' the faith of their fore-fathers. About here on the bank of the Jhelum, are two old *mohallas* of Budhger and Malchimar. The former had been a centre of learning during the Buddhist period while the latter was the dwelling place of the new converts to Islam whom the *Brahmans,* the ruling upper caste Hindus, scornfully termed as *maleechs* or the polluted. The grave of Sultan Sadr-ud-Din and the first mosque of Kashmir, built by him, are also located here. The present Rinchen Masjid is a later construction. Wazpore, a locality inhabited mostly by *wazas,* the chefs who specialize in *wazwan,* the famous multi-course Kashmiri cuisine served to guests on marriage ceremonies and other special occasions, is also situated here.

On the left bank of the Jhelum, at Fateh Kadal, is the tomb of the pious daughter of Sultan Shahab-ud-Din's army chief, Bibi Taj Khatoon, the wife of Mir Mohammad Hamdani. The old CMS School building, demolished in 1986 after it was gutted in fire, was also situated here. The Mujahid Manzil, the National Conference headquarters from where the political movement in Kashmir was spearheaded in 1930s and 40s, and the Pathar Masjid, a mosque built in AD 1623 by queen Noor Jahan, wife of Emperor Jahangir, also adorn the riverine here.

The mosque is a good piece of the Mughal architecture in Kashmir and is also known as Shahi Masjid, Masjid-i-Sangeen and Nov Masjid. It was, however, not used by locals after the queen was accused to have derogatorily equated the cost of construction of the mosque to that of her bejewelled slipper[41]. Another reason for the locals not offering prayers in the mosque was said to be its construction by a woman[42]. The Sikh rulers locked the mosque and banned prayers therein. During the drought in AD 1754, the Sikh governor, Sukh Jeevan, stored foodgrains in the mosque[43] and used it as a godown for many years. The beautifully decorated stone flooring in its compound was uprooted by Mahan Singh who used the material to build ghats at Basant Bagh and Sher Garhi[44]. The mosque was later reclaimed by Governor Sheikh Mohi-ud-Din.

A little distance downstream from here, on the left bank of the river, is the tomb of the renowned saint and scholar, Syed Yaqoob Sarfi, popularly known as Eishan Sahab. He was a great scholar whose books were part of the curriculum at the renowned *Madras-i-Nizamia* of Baghdad, plundered and set ablaze by Mongol warrior, Halaku Khan.

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The Jhelum then flows through the localities of Aali Kadal, Nawa Kadal, Jamalata, Safa Kadal and Chhatabal. Through these areas, the river bank is adorned by the temples of Resh Peer and Roopa Bhawani, the tomb of Syed Ali Akbar, the shrine of Rahbab Sahab, a degree college for women and the tomb of Shah Nemat Ullah Qadiri who, as some say, is the 14th centuary AD Syrian born saint and poet whose prophecies in Persian verse are a piece of excellent literature through which he, like Michel de Nostredame (AD 1503-66), foretold important events. During crucial times like war, these prophecies in print are suddenly in great demand in the Valley and people interpret the events in their light.

Chhatabal is famous as a fish market where also is located the Weir in the Jhelum. The length of the river from Sonawar to Safa Kadal is 9 kms but the crow-flight distance is under 4 kilometers. At the lower end of the Srinagar city, the Jhelum is joined by another tributary, the Dudganga, rising in the Panjal mountains and the river, after its tryst with the City of Plenty, continues its onward journey to the district of Baramulla or Varmul.

The first significant village on the course of the Jhelum, after it leaves Srinagar, is Shadipore, 25 kilometers north of the capital city, founded by Sultan Shahab-ud-Din (AD 1355-73) and earlier named after him as Shahab-ud-Din Pore. Abul Fazl refers to Emperor Akbar's excursion to this place where the latter enjoyed the shade of magnificent *Chinars*[45]. The importance of Shadipore, however, lies in its being the place of convergence of the Jhelum and its largest tributary in the Valley, the Sindh, which joins the river on its right bank.

Five kilometers downstream from the confluence is situated the township of Sumbal, where on the left bank of the river is the mausoleum of a famous Muslim saint, Ahmad Sahab. Below the township, a small channel connects the Jhelum with the Manasbal lake. A kilometre and a half downstream from Sumbal, on the left bank of the Jhelum, lies Andarkot or the old Jayapidaore, founded by the 8th century ruler of Kashmir, Jayapida, as his capital city. A fort, surrounded by swamps, was constructed by the King here which later served as a refuge for future rulers who would escape from their palaces in the face of crisis and take shelter in the fort. Last Hindu ruler, Kota Rani, was arrested here and dethroned by Shams-ud-Din Mir[46].

It is said that when Suya, the engineer of Awantivarman, diverted the course of the Jhelum from Parihaspore to Shadipore, the city of Jayapidapore lost its glory. Earlier, the confluence of the Jhelum and the Sindh was believed to be at Tregam, 2 kilometers south-west of Shadipore,[47] and the river, flowing through Naid Khai, would join the Ningli stream before meeting with the Wular.

The next major village on the banks of the Jhelum is Hajan, 35 km from Srinagar and the birthplace of a renowned Kashmiri writer, Professor Mohi-ud-Din Hajini, and his grandfather, poet Wahab Parrey. Hajini (b. 1917 d. 1993) was a multi-faceted personality the likes of whom Kashmir has not produced for long. He was a great scholar, a linguist of repute, a writer of high calibre and, above all, a Kahmiri to the core who did not let his knowledge go to his head and lived a rustic life. He was a professor of Arabic but mastered many other languages like English, Persian, Urdu etc. also. Besides being a prolific writer, his knowledge of Science and Mathematics was also enviable. A true lover of his motherland and its glorious past, Hajini was never at ease with the prevailing political system and earned wrath of the rulers that be for his upright character.

From here, the Jhelum passes through some small and insignificant villages before merging with the Wular at Banyari.

The Wular

The Wular is the largest fresh water lake of Asia and a very picturesque one. It is situated 39 kilometers from Srinagar in the north Kashmir district of Baramulla. The lake is the 'Delta of the Jhelum' into which the river empties itself before seeking a passage, out of the lake, to Baramulla. It also receives many huge streams like the Ningli, the Madhumati, the Erin, the Ferozpore and the Gundar.

The Wular commands a huge catchment area of 83,000 hectares[48]. The sedimentation of the lake, caused due to siltation brought down by the Jhelum and other nallahs, has taken the toll of the Wular. It has enormously been sedimented, with the result that the lake has shrunk from its believed area of 273 square kilometers to a mere 50 square kilometers[49]. The revenue records put the area at 130.20 square kilometers of which 3.70 square kilometers are under agricultural use, 0.15 square kilometers under human habitation and 60.5 square kilometers under agro-forestry[50]. A 1961 report indicated the lake area as 202 square kilometers[51]. However, the latest survey, conducted through remote sensing in 1997, puts the present total area of the lake at 79 square kilometers[52]. Of this, 44 square kilometers is clear water body and the rest either marshy or covered by willow plantation. Out of the total catchment area of 114512 hectares in the vicinity of the Wular, 43328 hectares are severely and 21641 hectares moderately degraded[53].

People have not let the lake be at peace with itself and continue to reclaim its peripheral area for agriculture and other purposes like they do with the Dal. The massive reduction in the lake area is affecting its water retention capacity causing inundation of vast areas during floods.

A legend about the lake says that once upon a time a great city was situated at its site. The city-folk indulged in all types of vices and, as a punishment from God, the place submerged and transformed into a huge lake.

Two major towns of Kashmir, Sopore and Bandipore, are situated on the shores of the Wular. According to an estimate, the Wular produces 60 per cent of the total fish consumed in the Valley[54]. The lake also produces *singhara* or water-nuts in abundance. The Government of India has drawn up a National Lake Conservation and Preservation Plan for six lakes including the Wular. The State government has sought an assistance of Rs. 104.60 crores from the central government for the conservation and development of the lake.

Zain-ul-Abideen had raised an artificial island, Zaina Lank, in the Wular by sinking stone-full of large boats and had constructed a royal house over it. Jonaraj considered it the biggest achievement in architecture. The King also built a mosque here for prayers during *Ramadhan*, the Muslim month of fasting[55]. The story about the construction of island is interesting.

During the time of Zain-ul-Abideen, a famous Muslim Saint, Syed Mohammad Rufayee, arrived in Srinagar in AD

1420, from Isfahan in Central Asia with a group of 120 saints and scholars. The King came out of the city to receive him. After two years' stay in Srinagar, Syed Rufayee wished to move to Baramulla and Zain-ul-Abideen accompanied him in his boat-journey on Jhelum[56]. As the boat was crossing the Wular, the King told the saint about the plight of people who would get caught in tempest while being in the centre of the lake. Thousands of people were said to have died in this way. Zain-ul-Abideen expressed his desire to construct an island in the lake for the safety of such people and requested Syed Rufayee to pray for his success which he did and the King was able to complete the gigantic task.

The Government in Kashmir had planned the Tulbul Navigational Lock Project in the Wular to stabilise the two major hydroelectric power houses on the Jhelum and explore the possibilities of few more on the river. However, the project did not take off in the face of stiff resistance by Pakistan which considers it against the Indus Waters Treaty signed between India and Pakistan at Karachi on September 19, 1960. The Treaty awarded the three eastern rivers, Ravi, Sutlej and Beas exclusively to India and the three western rivers, Indus, Jhelum and Chenab exclusively to Pakistan except for limited uses by India in upstream areas in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. The construction of storage dams in upstream Jhelum within the Valley is not allowed by the Treaty and that is why the hydroelectric projects on the Jhelum have to be run-of-the-river schemes.

'The Apple Town'

After its exit from the Wular, the Jhelum flows through Sopore, the 'Apple Town of Kashmir', 48 kilometers northwest of Srinagar. The town was the scene of many battles between rival Kashmiri armies including those of Zain-ul-Aabideen and his son, Adam Khan, Yusuf Shah Chak and Lohar Chak, and Malik Qazi Chak and the Magrey chieftains[57]. In 1945, the main political party of Kashmir, the National Conference, held an historical session here in which leaders from the Indian National

Congress like Jawahar Lal Nehru, Abdul Gaffar Khan and Indira Gandhi also participated.

The town is believed to have been settled by Suya, the engineer of Awantivarman, and was named after him as Suyapore[58]. The present name is believed to be the corrupted form of its earlier name. It is the chief port of the Wular and a good market for its products. During the Muslim period, it attained much importance. The Sopore town sits on either banks of the Jhelum. The tomb of the great Sufi poet of Kashmir, Rahim Sahab, is located on the right bank of the river. Biscoe regarded mosquitoes as the drawback to the town with whom the air is thick so much so that "it is difficult to eat one's food without swallowing them"[59]. The town was put to blaze several times between 1990 and 1996.

At Sopore, the Jhelum flows in a southwesterly direction to Baramulla receiving, midway on its right bank, the Pohru stream at Doabgah. The tributary drains the Lolab Valley, the northern end of Kashmir, before its merger with the Jhelum. Baramulla, at an altitude of 5200 feet, is situated on either banks of the Jhelum, 55 kilometers from Srinagar. It is the last major town in the course of the Jhelum through the Valley before the river flows to the other part of Jammu and Kashmir across the Line of Control (LoC), 60 km from the district headquarters of Baramulla. The town of Baramulla is an ancient and famous place. William Moorcroft, who was in Kashmir between AD 1819-25 describes the town as comprising about two hundred houses, with a bazaar and a custom station[60].

The town has now a population of about 50,000. It was an important stop-over, till 1947, on the Srinagar-Rawalpindi Road, also known as the Jhelum Valley Road, for it followed the course of the Jhelum into the Valley of Kashmir. The motorable road, opened in 1889[61] was the only way to travel into and out of Kashmir till 1916 when a carriage road, Banihal Cart Road, on the Banihal pass was thrown open, initially as the private property of the Dogra rulers and later, to public. The Jhelum Valley Road, gave a fillip to trade and tourism in the Valley. The essential commodities that would arrive in Kashmir by this road include salt, sugar, tea, tobacco, cotton, copper, iron, silver, kerosene and petrol while fruit, animal skin, timber, wool and ghee would go out of Kashmir to India and Afghanistan.

The Jhelum, in the town of Baramulla, passes through many small and medium sized localities of which worth mention are Khoja Bagh, Baramulla town and Khanpora, where on the left bank are the tomb of Syed Mohammad Rufayee Qadiri or Janbaz Wali, and Devi Temple and, on the right bank, Jama Masjid and Gurdwara Chhati Padshahi. The Gurdwara was constructed at the site where the sixth Sikh Guru, had planted a Chinar during his visit to Kashmir alongwith Jahangir[62]. The Gurudwara was reconstructed after dismantling the old structure in 1985.

There is a cauldron (*deg*) at the shrine of Syed Rufayee in which large quantities, 150 quintals to be precise, of rice and meat are cooked and distributed among people on annual *urs* (anniversary of the Saint). It is said about the cauldron that once a dispute arose over its ownership between two groups of people related to two shrines including that of Janbaz Wali when it was brought to Srinagar for repairs and nickle plating. The tussle saw the cauldron falling, from the boat in which it was being carried, into the Jhelum and sunk in the river. The *mutawwali* (care-taker of the shrine) saw Janbaz Wali in his dream identifying the place where the *deg* lied in the bottom of the river and asking him to bring it out. He obeyed the command and the cauldron was restored to the shrine. According to a belief, the offerings cooked in the cauldron are deemed as rejected if blood oozes out of it.

Downstream from here, the Jhelum flows through the villages of Sheeri, Gaantmul, Bunyar, where a major hydel power project has been constructed, Nowshehra, Lagama, Mohura, the site of the first hydroelectric power house in Kashmir, Chandanwari, Uri and Lalpul, the last village on the LoC. Between Uri and Lalpul, a mountain stream, Baandi nallah, joins the Jhelum on its right bank. Near Mohura, the Gingil village is known for ruins of 8th or 9th century AD structures.

The current of the Jhelum becomes rapid after it leaves, through a deep gorge, the town of Baramulla. It is more troubled and impetuous, "lamenting in foam and clamour its departure from the beautiful valley of Kashmir"[63] which itself is considered to be the gift of the river.

Beyond the Valley

Completing its journey within the Valley at Uri, the Jhelum crosses the Line of Control whereafter it is joined, at Domel near Muzafarabad, by another of its major tributaries, the Kishenganga also known as the Neelam river, rising in the mountains of north Kashmir Valley. Muzaffarabad, the capital of the separated portion of the erstwhile combined state of Jammu and Kashmir, was founded by Muzaffar Khan, a local chieftain.

Raja Zabardast Khan, who had succeeded his father Hassan Ali Khan as the ruler of Muzaffarabad in the early 19th century, was considered the symbol of Muslim resistance against the occupation of Muzaffarabad by Sikhs[64]. Due to his stiff resistance, Muzaffarabad, apart from Peshawar, was the only place in the entire Sikh kingdom where it could not firmly establish its rule and was constantly engaged in war[65]. Below its junction with the Kishenganga, the Jhelum forms the boundary between the undivided State of Jammu and Kashmir, as it stood on August 14, 1947, and Pakistani districts of Hazara and Rawalpindi.

Muzaffarabad, situated on the confluence of the Jhelum and the Kishenganga, is 138 kilometers from the famous Pakistani city of Rawalpindi. Being surrounded by mountains, it gives the look of a walled town. The Upper Jhelum Valley offers an interesting scenic excursion from Muzaffarabad. The Valley is broad with raised terraces above the river where rice and maize are widely grown. Muzaffarabad is a combination of old and new buildings and a blend of different cultures and languages.

Of the historic buildings, the Muzaffarabad Fort surrounded on three sides by the Neelam river wears a deserted look today. Its construction was started by Chak rulers of Kashmir following border skirmishes between their armies and those of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. The Fort was built to raise defences against Mughal expansionism and to ensure safety of the people and the land. It was completed by Muzaffar Khan in 1846. However, after the Mughals annexed Kashmir, the Muzaffarabad Fort lost its significance. Later, the Afghan rulers rediscovered its importance. The Dogra rulers, Gulab Singh and Ranbir Singh reconstructed and extended the fort.

Few kilometers out of Muzaffarabad, the Jhelum widens to form a small lake which was created by a landslide some years ago. Beyond Muzaffarabad, the Jhelum sweeps suddenly to the south and, about 10 kilometers below, receives the Kunara river of Hazara. After a downstream distance of about 144 kilometers from Baramulla, the river reaches Mangla where it is joined by river Poonch. The Mangla Dam was constructed here on the Jhelum for hydro-electric power generation. The powerhouse generates 10 MWs of electricity and a canal coming out of the dam irrigates an area of 3 million acres[64]. The river further flows down to the town of Jhelum in Pakistan and finally joins the Chenab at Trimmu.

Within Pakistan, the Jhelum flows through many cities and towns including Jhelum, Pind Dadan Khan, Bhera and Khushab.

The old city of Jhelum was situated on the left bank of the river. It is believed that in AD 1532 boatmen crossed the river and founded the new city on the right bank. Situated about 160 kilometers northwest of Lahore, the city is an important market for timber, and has sawmills and plywood, textile, cigarette, and glass industries. An army supplies corps training center and two colleges are also in the town. It is an ancient city dating back to the Alexander's invasion of India. When the Greek warrior was engaged in the war of expansion with Indian rulers, his battle horse, Bucephalla, died here. Being very fond of the animal, his death saddened Alexander and he ordered that the horse be buried there. Accordingly, Bucephalla was laid to rest following which a settlement sprang up there. Jhelum is the place that is being known as the origin of one of the better known names of the River of Kashmir. The former Prime Minister of India, Inder Kumar Gujral was born and brought up here before he migrated to India in the wake of the Partition in 1947.

Pind Dadan Khan is named after the Rajput Chieftan, Dadan Khan, who held sway here in the second quarter of the 17th century. Being a rich trade centre, the British made Pind Dadan Khan a municipality in 1876. However, the importance was short lived and it was subsequently relegated from a bustling trade centre to a sleepy town. Some vistages speak of its great past. The hand woven bed covers are a speciality of the town.

Bhera is a historical place for many reasons. Alexander passed through this town in BC 326 during his military expedition to India[67]. It was here that Naseer-ud-Din Babar, the founder of the Mughal rule in India, formulated his strategy in AD 1525 consequent to which he first captured Lahore and then Delhi. Sher Shah Suri too passed through Bhera in AD 1541 and constructed a Jama Masjid here[68].

At Jhelum, the river turns southwestward along the Salt Range to Khushab where it again bends south to join the Chenab at Trimmu.

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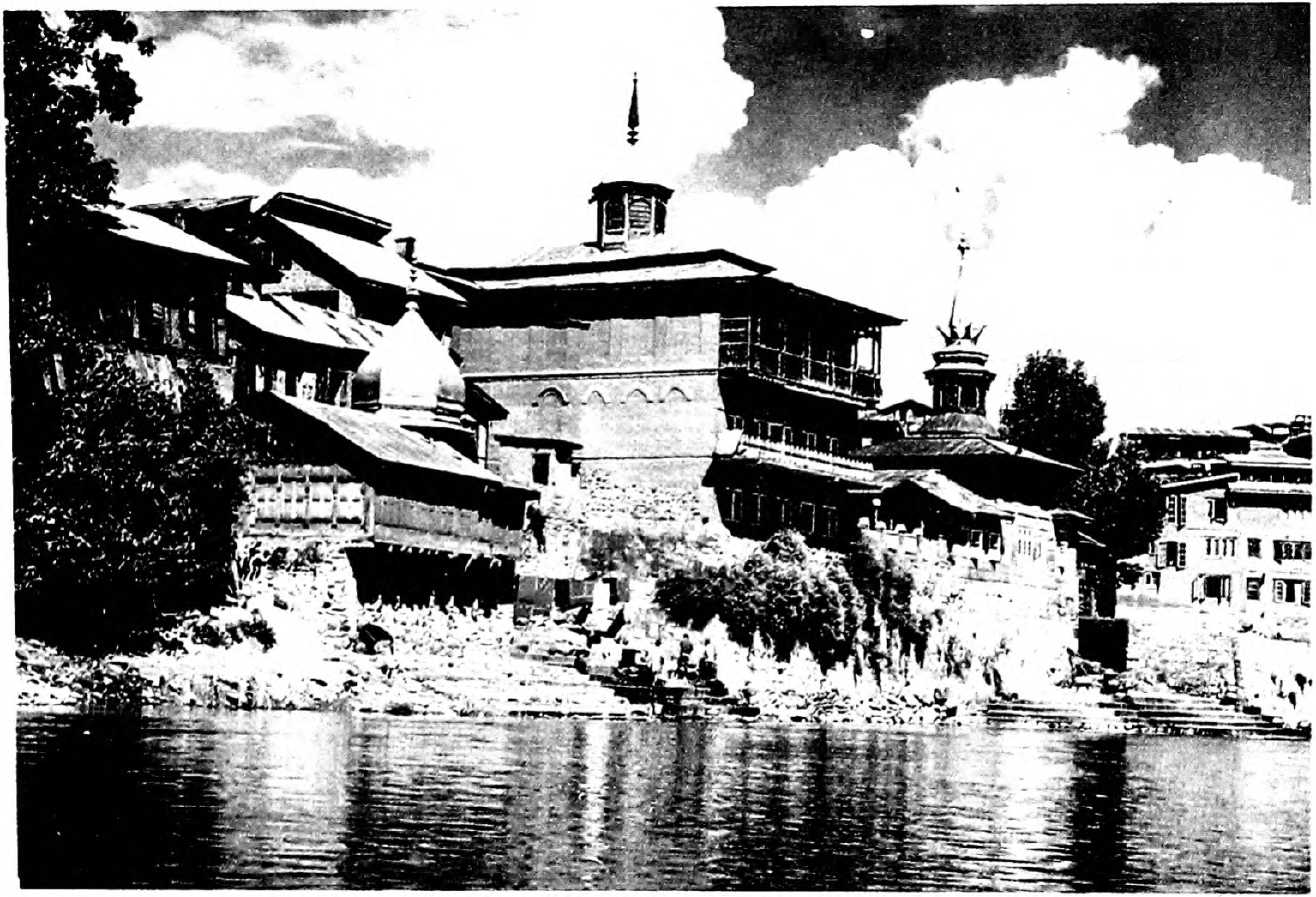


A mosque flanked by the shrine of Bulbul Sahab and Devi Temple on the bank of the Jhelum.

The Dal : Famous Kashmir lake whose surplus water flows into the Jhelum.

CULTURE AND HISTORY

Beyond the dictionary meaning of a river as a copious stream of water flowing in a channel to sea, lake, marsh or another river, the Jhelum is the cultural symbol of Kashmir. The river that flows through almost the entire length of the Valley and beyond, has an intimate relationship with the life and times of the people living on its banks and their surroundings. It has had its admirers in emperors, poets and common folk alike. Alexander felt awe by its spate, Awantivarman beautified it by erecting embankments along its channel, Kalhana waxed eloquent about its virtues, Akbar loved to cruise on its waters and Zain-ul-Aabideen celebrated its birthday with festivity. Kashmir and the Jhelum are synonyms and one is known by the other.

The cultural significance of the river is enormous and primarily rooted in the Hindu mythology about its origin according to which the river is the incarnation of Parvati, the consort of Hindu god, Shiva. The ancient Hindus of Kashmir believed that those who drank water from Vitasta at the time of death obtained final deliverance. Thus, we have a 11th century queen, Suryamati, after abandoning the hope to see her son, asking for water from the Vitasta and reciting the verse, "But those who die with Vitasta water in their body obtain for certain final deliverance just like those who proclaim sacred learning"[1].

The religious touch about the river makes it auspicious, if not sacred, for the local Hindus. The *Nilmata* "equates" the Vitasta with the Ganges, the most revered river by the Hindus, in all aspects other than the collection of bones of the dead human beings after their cremation which the Ganga (Ganges) has in excess[2].

The birthday

Rooted in the belief that the river is the incarnation of Parvati is the observance of *Vyathtruvah*, birthday of the Jhelum, celebrated for long by Kashmiri Hindus on the 13th Bhadoon, the fifth month of the Hindu calendar. The occasion was so popular with the Hindus of Kashmir that the prominent secular minded Muslim ruler of Kashmir, Zain-ul-Aabideen, made it an annual feature to celebrate the day on public scale. The highlight of the occasion was the immersion of lighted lamps on the waters of the river and illumination of the roofs of houses and boats in the capital city of Srinagar.

The King would personally take part in the celebrations. On one such occasion, he embarked on a boat and went to see the capital. At the time of embarking and disembarking, the King accepted the blessings of the citizens and, while on board, listened to well composed songs. The display of lamps was graceful. The rows of lamps placed at the ferry on both banks looked beautiful. Women made offerings to the Jhelum and the King spent with pleasure the whole night listening to songs[3].

The Mughal emperor, Akbar, who seems to have taken many a political lesson from his forerunner, Zain-ul-Abideen, in so far as winning over the non-Muslim subjects is concerned, took personal interest and great pleasure in the illumination of the banks of the river. During his second visit to Srinagar on October 7, 1592, the Mughal Emperor not only enjoyed the saffron blossom at Pampore and celebrated the Hindu festival of *Diwali* but also ordered that the boats on the Jhelum, the banks of the river and roofs of the houses be illuminated[4].

Akbar's son and sccessor, Jahangir, during his stay in Kashmir in AD1620, "sate in a boat and went round" to see the lamp-lighting festival of *Vyathtruvah*[5]. The King says that it is an ancient custom that each year on this day everyone, whether rich or poor, whosoever has a house on the banks of the Jhelum, should light lamps[6]. Over the centuries, the celebration of *Vyathtruvah* has become a thing of the past. Attempts to revive it have failed. A group of locals tried to re-enact the ritual sometime around 1980 by immersing lighted lamps in the river near the Zero Bridge. The effort, however, did not succeed.

The illumination of the banks of the Jhelum had been also a part of the festivities associated with assumption of power by a ruler.

The local Hindus who prefer to be called Kashmiri Pandits, hold the river very auspicious and perhaps second only to the Ganges in India which commands immense religious appeal for the Hindus in general. Like the Ganges in case of other Hindus, the Pandits immerse the ashes of their dead relatives into the Jhelum at its confluence with the Sindh at Shadipore below Srinagar. The act is performed amid chanting of religious hymns.

Although many rivulets and mountain streams make numerous confluences with the Jhelum along its course, there are only two held sacred by the local Hindus, *viz.*, the confluence of the Lidder and the Jhelum at Sangam, about 44 kilometers from Srinagar, in south Kashmir and the one of the Jhelum and the Sindh at Shadipore, 20 kilometers north of Srinagar. The first confluence has lost its religious importance but the one at Shadipore still enjoys some sanctity which it had in great measure during the reign of Hindu rulers like Queen Didda (AD 890-1003) who "sanctified" the confluence by construction of *Mathas*[7] and Ananta (AD 1028-1063) who made it "resplendent with temples glittering in gold, with *Mathas* and *Agraharas*"[8].

Cultural significance

Like any river, the Jhelum has been culturally important to the places along its course. The major towns and cities of Kashmir, including the ones that from time to time served as the capital cities, were built on the banks of the Jhelum. Places of great cultural significance were also similarly situated. Being the main means of transportation for ages until the first half of the present century, the cultural significance of the river has been immense. Various ghats on its banks served as present day bus stands and railway platforms where people would collect in numbers to go to their destinations in different types of boats and also to send and receive cargo. Lovers would also meet here.

The ghats remained crowded throughout the day. Vegetables would be sold here and people belonging to different faiths would begin their day with a visit to these ghats for cleaning their bodies before morning prayers. The banks of the Jhelum are dotted with various shrines, mosques and temples visited by devotees in thousands. Each devotee would first take a bath or wash his limbs before entering a prayer house. This religious duty would provide an occasion for the people to meet one another and have social interaction. The ghats would witness great hustle and bustle throughout the day and served as important social spots. There were, and in fact still are, many ghats on the banks of the Jhelum although only few, like the Khanabal Ghat, earned mention in local literature.

The ghats have been also used by washermen. At such ghats in the city, like the ones at Aali Kadal and Maharaj Ganj, washermen are still seen busy with their job. Since the river transport system has ceased to operate in Kashmir, these ghats are now known as *dheb ghats* or washermen's ghats. Carpets, weaving of which forms the major handicraft activity in the Valley, are also washed here before being sent to the market. Adjacent to a ghat was another social spot known as *yarbal*. The word literally means 'a meeting place for friends'.

Yarbal was used by people, mostly womenfolk, to wash clothes and fetch water for drinking and cooking purposes. There are several places in Kashmir with *yar* connected with their names, like Khanyar, Naidyar, Surasyar, Shurahyar, Badyar, Sehyar, Ganpatyar, Batyar, Dal Hassanyar Haftyarbal, etc. pointing to their being social spots at some point in time.

A ghat and a *yarbal* is a platform made of a local stone on the river bank and connected with a stone-stair going up to the bund. Till a couple of decades ago, the bund has served as an important centre of social and religious activity. Women would sing *rouf* (folk song) on Muslim festivals of *Eid* on the bund and in Srinagar city such festivities would add colour to the event. On occasions of other festivals like *Shab-e-Baraat* or *Eid-e-Milad*, the banks of the Jhelum were illuminated by rows of lighted lamps in the evening.

Community bathing-cells

In the olden days, there were community bathing-cells, known as *Sinan koosht*, constructed on rafts on the banks of the Jhelum. These were used by ladies as health clubs where, according to Bilhana, damsels washed off the sandal and saffron paint from their bosoms which they would use to keep themselves beautiful[9]. In the bathing-cells the women, in order to fight the winter cold, would apply on their bodies a paint of saffron and cover themselves with *Tosh* shawls[10] obtained from the hair of the Tibetan antelope. The bathing-cells on the Jhelum were present till the early 20th century and were among the most characteristic features of the river scene within Srinagar. The humorous sketches of the city life drawn by Kalhana show that these formed the favourite meeting places of the idle and curious people in the Hindu period[11] even as we have seen them in the later periods.

According to Aurel Stein, Kashmir capital has always been a hot bed of "political gossip and fertile nursery of false and often amusingly absurd rumours"[12]. Strolling down to the city bridges and the ghats on the river bank, one would always watch small crowds eagerly gathering round the news-fabricators ever to be found in these localities.

There were also bathing-places adjacent to places of worship situated on the banks of the river, of which there are still many in the city of Srinagar. At times, these were a cause of friction between the two communities of Muslims and Hindus. In fact there have been disputes over some of these bathing-places like in AD 1893 when the local Hindus had unlawfully occupied a bathing-place belonging to the Muslims near a mosque at Aali Kadal. A case filed by the Hindus in a court of law was dismissed in the absence of any proof. The court order notwithstanding, they occupied the place on the secretly issued orders of their co-religionist ruler[13].

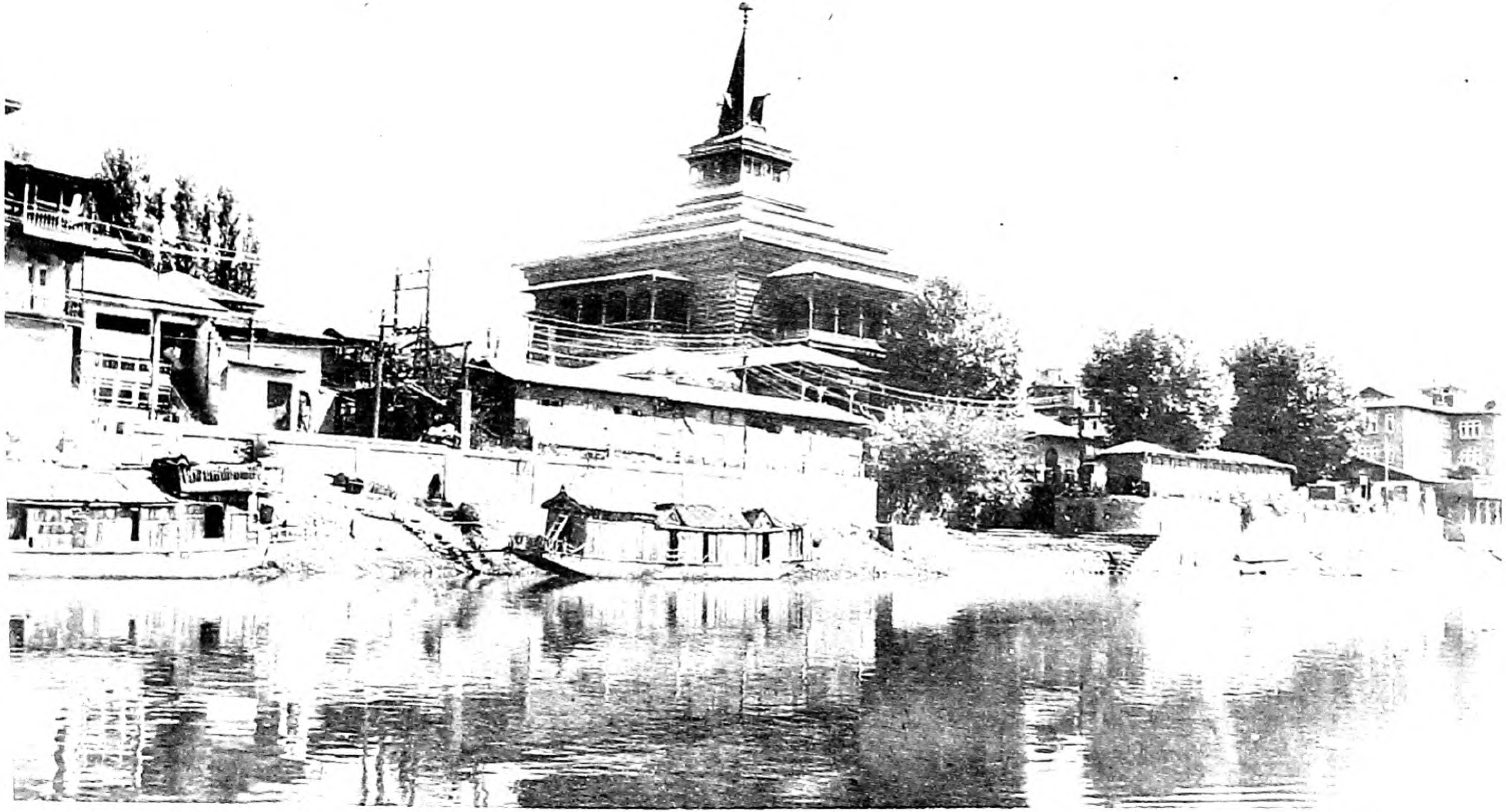
Major link

One of the major links of the Jhelum with the socio-cultural life of Kashmir is the community of *hanjis* (boatmen) living on the river. The community is professionally divided into many sections and each known by its profession like *doong haenz, bahatchi haenz, gaade haenz, demb haenz, gaer haenz, hakh haenz, seaki haenz*, etc. The community members are usually engaged in tourist trade, fishing, extraction and sale of sand and timber. Before their shifting about three decades back onto the Dal Lake, the house-boats were a permanent feature on the river Jhelum. A walk downstream from Sonawar to Lal Mandi then presented a magnificent look in summer with decorated house-boats lining both sides of the river. These house-boats were preferred by foreign tourists for their stay in the Valley.

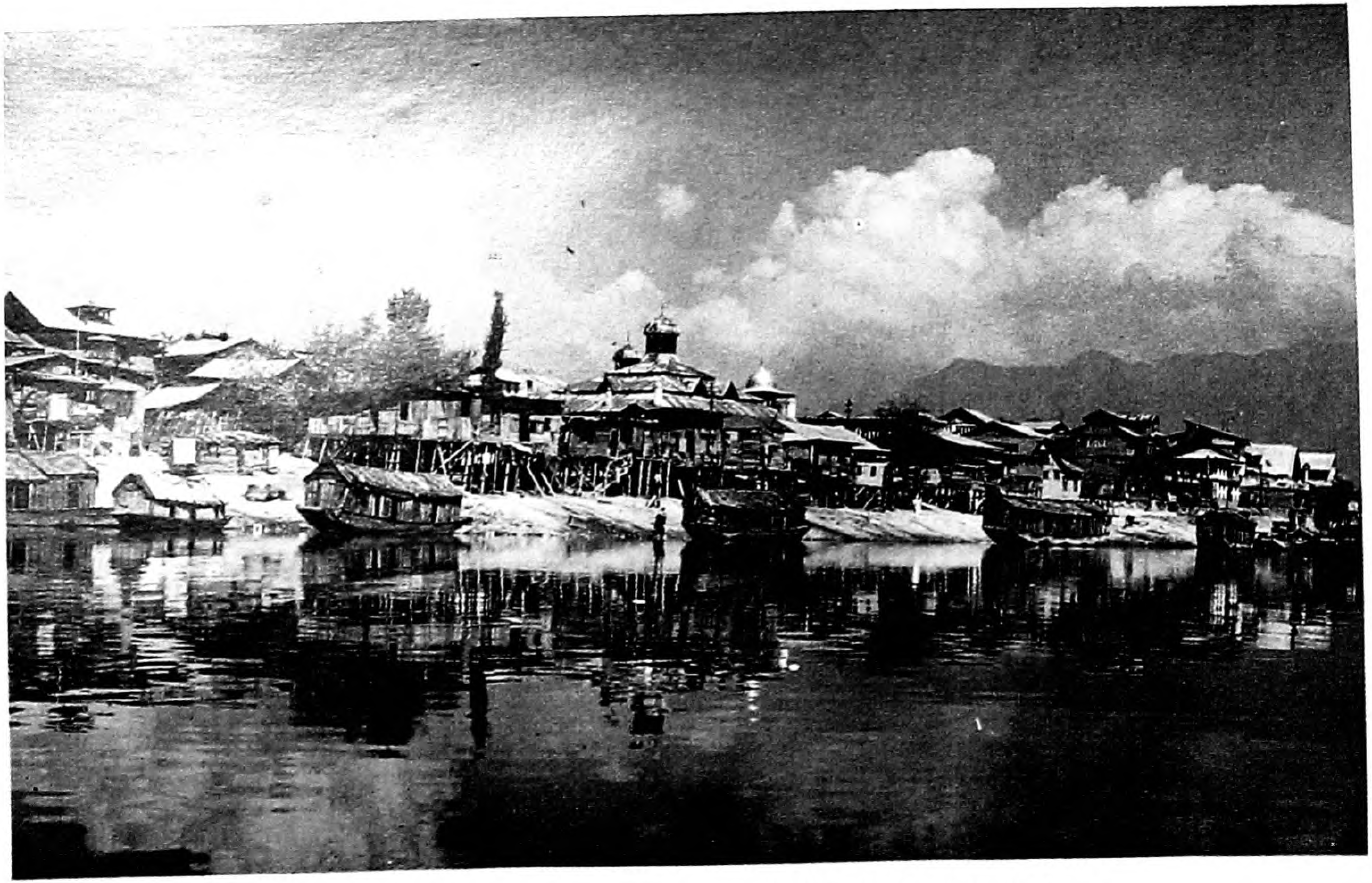
The *hanjis* are generally considered to be a hard working lot with most of the young generation now having taken to other jobs. Those of the community members who financially progressed bade farewell to their boat life and constructed houses in various quarters of the city. The community was once considered very quarrelsome as pointed out by Walter Lawrence[14] and Tyndale Biscoe[15]. The two authors write that when a quarrel between two *hanji* families did not seem to end till sunset, one of the quarrelling parties would invert the basket hen-coop to signal a cease-fire till morning when the two sides would begin with new vigour.

The scenes witnessed by the two Englishmen are now scarce, greatly due to the material advancement of the community. Biscoe respects them for their work as boatmen and is "delighted" to see them forge up the river against a strong stream with pole or paddle, "taking advantage of every swirl and eddy behind a projecting wall or pier of a bridge"[16]. Lawrence believes that half the stories to the discredit of Kashmir and its inhabitants are due to the fertile imagination of the *hanji*, who after the Irish car-driver, tells quaint scandals of the Valley and its rulers[17].

The *hanjis* are an important section of the Kashmiri society. Although their actual number is not known, not even of those living on the Jhelum alone, the rough estimates suggest their population to be one lakh, including those who have shifted to housing colonies and switched over to other professions. The census of 1891 had given their collective number as 33,870[18]. As



The 14th century Muslim shrine, *Khanqah-e-Moalla* on the right bank of the river in downtown Srinagar



A quarter of old Srinagar city sitting on the left bank of the Jhelum.

to their origin, they claim to be the descendants of Prophet Noah, even as Lawrence hints at the possibility of their gypsy origin[19]. Their profession in Kashmir, however, is very ancient and according to one belief, Raja Praversen introduced them from Sarandeep or present Sri Lanka. The surnames of the *hanjis* are also derived from various ghats where they had been putting up like Alikadali and Badyari.

The marriage parties taken out in *doongas* by *hanjis* on the Jhelum was a festivity, not seen any more. The cultural transformation that Kashmir witnessed during the last half century saw this colourful custom drowning in the Jhelum. The *doongas* were tastefully decorated for such occasions. The *baratees* (invitees to the marriage feast) would enjoy the cruise with singing and dancing groups entertaining them. People in large numbers would watch these boats from the banks and from over the bridges. Picnickers often used *doongas* to enjoy themselves and large groups attending the festival at the shrine of Qamar Sahab at Ganderbal would also embark on *doongas* from different ghats on the Jhelum to reach the shrine.

Arrangements for board and lodge were normally provided in these boats. Usually *wazas* were employed to cook *wazwan* to be served on board. The *bachhe nagme*, the singing and dancing presentation by young boys. was a regular feature of such merry cruises. The cultural activity, however, subsequently degraded into an occasion for gambling and drinking and became a taboo for people with strong moral moorings.

Shrines on the banks

The banks of the Jhelum have provided fertile ground for various religious places like shrines, mosques and temples and all along its course such sacred buildings enrich the skyline of Kashmir. The shrines are of great religio-cultural value as the people with whom these are associated have had a significant influence on the lives of the local people during their stay in Kashmir. Of these, Mir Syed Ali Hamdani and Syed Abdur Rehman stand out very prominently in the galaxy of Muslim preachers and religious men who came to Kashmir. The shrines of the two saints stand on the banks of the Jhelum at Khanqah-e-

Moalla and Bulbul Lankar, respectively in the interior Srinagar city.

While Syed Abdur Rehman actually did the ground work for the spread of Islam in Kashmir, it is Mir Syed Ali who is considered the initiator of the religion in the Valley as thousands of locals were converted to Islam by him. It is commonly believed that the mass conversion was followed by the burning of the discarded two and a half *maunds* of sacred thread ritualistically worn by Hindus around their neck as an identification mark of belonging to the community. He, like Syed Abdur Rehman was no warrior nor did he weild a sword to convert people to his faith. Both were preachers who had covered thousands of miles of rugged terrain on foot to reach Kashmir and spread the light of Islam.

The shrines are visited by thousands of people especially on festivals associated with the Saints. On such occasions, the shrines become focal points of religio-cultural activities with children and women-folk in particular enjoying the festivities. These shrines, together with others like those of Syed Hassan Mantaqi at Awantipore, Woosi Sahab and Eishan Sahab and Shah Nemat Ullah Qadri, in downtown Srinagar, on the banks of Jhelum have been centres of great reverence for the people.

The saints with whom these shrines are linked have, through their teachings, revolutionised the social and religious lives of the people of Kashmir. Similarly, the temples of Maha Kali, Raghunath Mandir, Hanuman Mandir and Ganesh Mandir, situated on the banks of the river, attract Hindus in large numbers. Besides religious places, there are also some ruins of landmark buildings like the archaeological sites of Awantipore and Pandrethan situated on the banks of the Jhelum and pointing to the rich cultural heritage of Kashmir.

Superstitions

Kashmiris being generally superstitious, the Jhelum has come handy in the spread of various frightful stories causing great distress to the people. Monstrous creatures were believed to be living in the river that were said to be coming out of it to attack people and tear their faces and breasts. Towards the end of the 19th century a frightful creature, who, some said, was like a great cat, was rumoured to have struck the city. While nobody had actually seen the creature it was believed to be coming out of the Jhelum to visit the homes at night[20].

Prior to it, another terrible beast was supposed to inhabit the river one summer. Frightening stories about it were making rounds in Srinagar and no one dared to bathe in the river for a month. When, after the summer vacations, the students returned to school dirty and unclean, Tyndale Biscoe, persuaded 130 boys to leap into the Jhelum from Amira Kadal, and swim right through the city to Safa-Kadal "so that this beast might burst itself with swallowing so many boys and thus would save the city"[21]. The bridges and banks and the roofs of the houses were crowded with people to see what would happen. "Nothing did happen and next day city was washing itself once more, for the bogey was slain"[22].

With the spread of education, superstition related to Jhelum, as to other things, has waned. These superstitions were generally rumours deliberately spread by people to frighten their children away from the river to avoid accidents as the maximum people drowning in the Jhelum were children. The Jhelum, it may be said here, does not have any scaring creature living in it. A small water creature, otter, also known as *sag-i-abi* or water-dog, has been sighted in the river.

Intellectual and educational development

The Jhelum has closely watched the intellectual and educational development of Kashmir. On its banks, the scholars and the academics would assemble and exchange their thoughts. Bilhana refers to the scholarly discussions held in his time in the high rising buildings situated on the banks of the Vitasta[23]. Some of the "most eloquent teachers of Shaivism, an influential form of Hinduism in Kashmir, were also found on the banks of the river"[24]. Major educational centres were also set-up on its banks.

The great Muslim saints, Syed Abdur Rehman and Mir Syed Ali Hamdani, too chose the banks of the Jhelum to impart Islamic teachings to common people. The honour of the first non-conventional teaching centre of Islamic theology could well be claimed by Khanqah-e-Moalla. Various mosques, shrines and temples constructed on the banks of the Jhelum also served as teaching centres in their own right as the *moulvies* and *purohits* were always available to impart to the interested people the basics of their religion.

The indigenous schools of Kashmir, in fact, have always been connected with the mosques and were known as *maktabs*. The Christian Missionary schools were also set-up on the banks of the Jhelum at Feteh Kadal in downtown Srinagar. The C. M. S. School was first set-up in the premises of the hospital in Srinagar in AD 1880 because of the opposition of the Dogra administration which did not allow renting a house for school[25]. Ten years later, however, it did allow shifting of the school to a large house on the river bank at Fateh Kadal where the number of students shot up to 200 from a mere 5 in the hospital premises school[26].

Some time between 1893 and 1895, a girls school was also opened by Mission Ladies at Fateh Kadal itself. "They (school buildings) overhang the river and with their balconies and lattice windows are decidedly picturesque"[27]. The boys would jump out of these windows and off the roof into the river to take a bath and enjoy themselves. The two schools were later, in the 20th century, shifted to Sheikh Bagh in the civil lines where the missionaries had earlier obtained a building in AD 1883. The schools, again, are situated on the river bank.

Source of distress

Apart from causing death and destruction during floods, the river has been a source of great distress to the natives in autocratic dispensations like the Dogra rule. Fishing in the river, which otherwise provides succour to a large section of population and a staple diet to the locals, was then a curse for a Kashmiri. It was not only an invitation to severe torture but also to great misfortune that would visit the family of the person caught fishing.

After the death of Gulab Singh, the palace astrologer was believed to have told the royal family that the Maharaja had reincarnated as a fish after which fishing in the Jhelum was officially banned. The violator was ruthlessly dealt with. An unspecified number of innocents suffered this injustice. The poor fellows would use their lines or nets in the Jhelum for their sustenance rather than for defying the ban; indeed their religious faith also would not entertain the logic behind it. The then Settlement Commissioner of Kashmir, Walter Lawrence, refers to this grossly unjust practice thus: "On the death of Maharaja Gulab Singh, the killing of fish was strictly prohibited for about six years, and even now no man may catch fish between Amiran Kadal and Zaina Kadal"[28].

Another distress that would visit the locals through the Jhelum was the *begar* (covree) at the time of the annual Hindu pilgrimage to the Amarnath Cave situated in the high mountains of south Kashmir[29]. The procession, carrying the *chhuri*, mace of Shiva, held sacred by Hindus, would then originate from Amritsar and arrive in Kashmir via Lahore and Rawalpindi, now in Pakistan. After reaching Baramulla through the Jhelum Valley Road, the procession would embark on boats rowed upstream to Khanabal, a river journey far more in length than its surface distance of 100 kilometers. To ensure a smooth upstream cruise, forced labour was employed to pull the barges along the banks under the burning August sun with ropes tied around the bodies of the labourers on the one side and hooked to the barges on the other[30].

The Jhelum is a witness to many a cruelty perpetrated on Kashmiri Muslims during their long subjugation when the subjects, particularly the working class, were fleeced to the last penny by way of taxes and exactions. A peaceful procession, taken out by workers on April 29, 1865 to protest against the exploitation by the officials of the shawl industry, was met with brute force by the army. Many processionists were injured and several were pushed into the Keta Kol. As many as 28 bodies were recovered from the scene of the massacre[31]. The infuriated workers lifted the bodies and took out a procession. The Government came down heavily on the leaders of the procession and all the four of them were arrested, lashed and their skin peeled off. When they were half dead, they were fettered and thrown into the Jhelum with huge iron balls tied to their necks[32].

During the Sikh rule (AD 1819-46), when the persecution of Muslims by the State was at its worst with mosques locked, offering of prayers banned and *azan* (call for prayers) forbidden, one governor, Phoola Singh, driven by bigotry, marched with cannons up to the western bank of the Jhelum opposite the Khanqah-e-Moalla to blast the sacred shrine[33]. The grim situation was, however, saved by the intervention of an influential citizen, Birbal Dhar. Phoola, nevertheless, banned prayers in several other mosques, seized the Pather Masjid and converted it into state property[34].

Jhelum and the suiciders

The frustration associated with family tension, deprivation and emotional break-down many a time leads people to end their lives for which they employ different methods. In Kashmir an easy and the most employed method is to jump into the Jhelum. Newspapers often carry reports about a youth failing in examination, a man driven by poverty or strained marital life or a failed lover throwing himself into the river to seek an end to his depression.

There is a particular section in the boatmen community known as *dungal* or frogsmen who are employed to fish out the bodies of the suiciders or those drowned in the river. These are professionals who stay under water for long durations to locate and bring out the bodies. The bodies of the people murdered for one reason or the other, are, at times, also consigned to the river to remove evidence. During the last twelve turbulent years in Kashmir since 1989, an alarmingly increased number of corpses have been fished out of the Jhelum. Although it is difficult to be precise, the number could be in hundreds.

The suiciders are not the only ones to jump into the Jhelum . The mystics, or *darvaishes* as they are known in Kashmir, have also dived into the river and stayed under water for too long a period to be imagined coming out alive. In one such case, Woosi Sahab is said to have jumped into the Wular after getting annoyed over an un-Islamic cultural show of dance and music organised by Zain-u-Aabideen on the completion of Zaina Lank, an island built by him on the lake. Following this incident, a frantic rescue operation was conducted. Divers were pressed into service for the whole night and the following day but without any success.

The merry making function thus turned into an occasion of grief and despair. Dejected and heart-broken, the King decided to return to Srinagar and, alongwith his companions, embarked on a boat in a state of bereavement. During his upstream journey, Zain-ul-Aabideen, to his utter disbelief, spotted Woosi Sahab at Asham, a village upstream of Wular, washing his *khirqah* (dress of a religious mendicant) on the banks of the Jhelum[35]. After much persuation and having expressed regret, the King made him to embark on the boat. The boat journey concluded at Aali Kadal where Woosi Sahab spent the rest of his life in devotion to Allah.

I recently heard on local television an old man talking about a blind *darvaish* whom he accompanied as a child to the Jhelum for ablution. The mystic, a *muezzin* (caller of prayers) in a local mosque, walked into the river, dived and was gone. The child was frightened to see the blind man disappearing into the water as he dreaded the idea of someone questioning him about the *muezzin* whom he had led to the river. The poor chap waited for long, hoping the man would emerge from the water. As that did not happen, he returned home with faltering steps, only to be greeted by the *azan* (call for prayers) of the blind mystic who had simply vanished into the Jhelum.

Such miracles, however, are not heard of now.

Strategic importance

The Jhelum has enjoyed great strategic importance throughout the history of Kashmir. It served as an impediment to many an advancing army and rescued situations for defending rulers. The control over the river or a bridge over it meant a great leap forward in the ultimate victory for an invading or defending ruler, as the case would be. Many historical events are associated with the river of which the foremost dates back four thousand years to Alexander's invasion of India when the great conqueror fought a battle with Raja Porus on the banks of the Jhelum in Punjab (now in Pakistan).

The battle of Hydaspes, as it is known, is the first battle in the history of the Indian subcontinent about which authentic account is available. The huge waters of the river had come in the way of the Macedonian army to launch an attack on the native ruler. It was too awful for the world conqueror to be stopped by the fury of the Jhelum. He ultimately had to cover a distance of 18 miles (29 kilometers) upstream, from where Porus was encamped on the opposite bank of the river, to cross the Jhelum and pounce on the enemy and defeat her.

The size and the fury of the Jhelum, besides the strength and determination of Porus who refused to surrender to and make personal appearance before Alexander, utterly dismayed the Macedonians. That Alexander was intimidated by the magnitude of the Jhelum is endorsed by his historian, Curtius, who acknowledges the gravity of the situation thus: "The Macedonians were intimidated not only by the appearance of the enemy, but by magnitude of the river to be crossed, which spread out to a width of no less than four stadia in a deep channel which nowhere opened a passage for fords, presented the aspect of a vast sea. Yet, it did not diminish the proposition to its wider diffusion but it rushed impetuously like a seething torrent compressed into a narrow bed by closing in its banks. Besides, at many points the presence of rocks was revealed where the waves were driven back in eddies. The bank presented a still more formidable aspect, for, as far as the eye could see it was covered with cavalry and infantry, in the midst of which, like so many massive structures, stood the huge elephants, which being of set purpose provoked by the drivers, distressed the ear with their frightful roars. The enemy and the river both in their front struck with sudden dismay the hearts of the Macedonians"[36].

Alexander appreciated the gravity of the situation he was confronted with. He saw the impossibility of crossing the Jhelum at a point where Porus waited for him on the opposite bank. He also realised the likelihood of his horses refusing to mount the opposite bank in the face of giant elephants encountering them with trumpeting roar and terrifying them even before they gained the shore.

'Like one King should treat another'

Knowing that his terrified horses will leap into the river, Alexander decided to go upstream to find a passage for fords. Simultaneously, however, he played a trick on Porus by making false moves up and down the river bank. According to Arrian, "Every night he (Alexander) kept moving the greater part of his mounted troops up and down the bank of the river, making such a noise as possible shouts, war cries and every sort of clatter and shindy which might be supposed to precede an attempted crossing"[37]. The strategy was to lull the enemy into complacency and it worked.

During the false moves for six weeks, Alexander did locate a ford "concealed behind a wooded bluff where the river took a sharp bend"[38]. The Macedonian army crossed the river and battled with Porus in which the latter was defeated but not before putting a brave fight. Alexander was highly impressed by his bravery and his bold and forthright reply to the question as to how he wished to be treated by Alexander. Porus replied, "Like one king should treat another". Alexander not only restored his kingdom and crown but also took Porus into the fold of his esteemed friends.

According to General Cunningham,[39] the point where Alexander crossed the Hydaspes may be identified with Jalalpur in the Jhelum District of the Pakistani Punjab even as some writers point to the possibility of the battlefield being the southern areas of the Mirpur district including the areas now submerged under the Mangla Dam[40].

Vitasta and the 'tears of grief'

During the time of Harsha (AD 1089-1101), Malla, father of Uccala and Sussala (the two later rulers of Kashmir) attacked him. The King himself proceeded to face the attack. The invader was defeated and his head chopped off. His princely consort and sister-in-law immolated themselves along with eight other ladies of the household in their residence on the left bank of the Jhelum. The water of the Vitasta, became warm by the conflagration of the great house and by the "tears hot with grief"[41]. Malla's wife, who was in her own seraglio on the other side of the river, also burnt herself there with her nurse.

After the death of his father, Sussala invaded Srinagar but was defeated. However, immediately after this, his brother Uccala entered the city. Harsha had built a great boat-bridge, *Mahasetu*, for his own benefit but as ill luck would have it, the bridge served to the enemy's advantage. The King took to the fight at the bridge-head. The elephant he rode was injured. It raised a trumpeting roar, turned back and trampled under its feet its own army. Harsha was defeated and in the ensuing melee, his palace, situated on the bank of the Jhelum somewhere near present Habba Kadal, was set ablaze and treasures and valuables looted[42].

Kalhana gives a graphic account of plunder of the palace at the hands of the citizens and the invading troops who fell upon the treasures and valuables as beasts fall upon their prey. It was a free for all situation with everybody taking away whatever he could lay his hands on. One person put camphor into his mouth taking it for white sugar but when it burnt his mouth he threw the pot into the river. Some people burnt royal wardrobes to get gold from the ashes of the clothes painted with gold and few women grinded a mass of unpierced pearls taking them for white rice-corns.

On top of this loot and plunder, the wild invaders pounced upon the ladies of the King's seraglio and were seen carrying them. The incident saw seventeen queens, including daughters-in-law of the King, burning themselves alive. Defeated and dejected, Harsha fled from the city and "wandered by the riverway"[43] till he reached, in the evening, at the confluence of the Jhelum and the Sindh. He was subsequently killed while hiding in a hut of an aescetic who turned out to be an informant and told his enemy about his presence there.

In the early 13th century AD, Naseer-ud-Din Qabacha, a slave of Qutub-ud-Din Aibak, the founder of Slave Dynasty in India, tried to overthrow Sultan Iltutmish and while chasing him, was drowned in the Jhelum in Punjab[44]. In AD 1492, the banks of the Jhelum at Sopore witnessed a fierce battle between the armies of the Pretender Fateh Shah and the legitimate ruler, Mohammad Shah, who overran the enemy stronghold at

Taragom and was encamped on the banks of the Jhelum at Sopore[45]. The Chaks swam in the dead of the night and fell on the royal camp. The bridge was destroyed at the command of the King. In the ensuing battle, the Chaks were defeated and their chieftain, Shams-ud-Din, was taken prisoner while the defeated soldiers fled towards the mountains.

Hundred men drown in the Jhelum

Around the middle of the Shahmiri rule (AD 1346-1561), Kashmir witnessed internecine strifes between the Saiyads, immigrants from Central Asia who wielded much power and influence and commanded respect of the local population for their supposed lineage to Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), and the local chieftains and nobles.

During one such fight, Saiyads chased the enemy. The soldiers, while crossing a boat- bridge on the Jhelum, tried to outpace one another to finish first at the other side of the river. In this struggle, the bridge broke down under their weight and a hundred men fell into the river. Being heavily weighed by their armour, they sank and died in the Jhelum.

The citizens who saw this incident were killed and in order to prevent similar mishaps, the Saiyads placed heaps of newly severed heads within sight of the people. They fixed several heads on poles and in order to strike terror in the onlookers, placed them like rows of lamps on the banks of the Jhelum. The corpses became swollen and emitted stench and drifted down into the Wular lake[46].

The floating of bodies is, however, not limited to this gruesome massacre. The river has also carried human corpses in large numbers during the times of great famines suffered by Kashmiris in the past. In AD 917-18, for instance, when the human skeletons and bones were spread in all directions in the Valley making it seem like a great burial-ground, the water in the Jhelum was covered by corpses[47].

The historical significance of the Jhelum is also reflected in the battle of supremacy over Kashmir fought between Sikhs and Afghans on the banks of the river. In this decisive battle at Maisuma, the Afghans lost control over the Valley. Another battle fought on the banks of the Jhelum at Maisuma itself in 1846 AD was between the Dogra army and the Kashmiri Resistance Forces headed by Governor Sheikh Imam-ud-Din[48]. The latter did not give up without a struggle and fighting went on for many days in Srinagar. Imam-ud-Din, with the help of Sher Ahmad and his Bombas, a martial tribe living in the Jhelum Valley downstream from Baramulla, held the fort for forty days, defeated Gulab Singh's troops and killed their commander, Lakhpat Rai. It was only after the British troops intervened and entered the Jammu territory that Imam-ud-Din surrendered,[49] thus paving the way for a century long Dogra domination over Kashmir. Lakhpat's *samadhi* in nearby Samandar Bagh[50] is still a witness to the losses suffered by the Dogra army there.

During the early years of post-1931 upsurge against the Dogra autocracy, the Muslim Conference, spearheading the movement, had established its office in a house-boat on the Jhelum near Pathar Masjid. It was here that the leader of the movement, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, was arrested after he made a fiery anti-Government speech at Khanqah-e-Moalla[51]. Immediately after the speech as the Sheikh entered the house-boat, the army cordoned it and took him a prisoner.

Fifty-two years later, when his Chief Minister son, Farooq Abdullah, was dismissed, a host of Indian opposition leaders including Inder Kumar Gujral who became the Prime Minister of India in 1997, nearly met with death here when the boat carrying them to the National Conference headquarters, situated on the bank of the Jhelum, capsized in the river near Khanqah-e-Moalla. The leaders had come to show solidarity with the deposed Chief Minister[52].

Rinchen's justice

The history of Kashmir unfolds many incidents and events where the Jhelum has held the central place. Some of these are interesting like the one related to the dispensation of justice by the 14th century ruler, Rinchen[53]. During his time, two persons were in dispute over the ownership of a foal, each claiming it to be born of the similar-looking mare that belonged to him. Unable to settle their dispute, they went to the King who asked for the two mares and the foal. The courtiers were unable to give any opinion whereupon the King took the mares and the young one in a boat to the middle of the Jhelum and threw the foal into the water. The mother mare instantly jumped into the river while the other only neighed. The dispute, defying solution, was thus resolved by the wisdom of the King using the Jhelum in imparting a just decision.

An interesting story is also told about the Vitasta having been brought by hungry Brahmans before King Damodra II when the latter refused to give them food without first himself taking a bath in the river. Damodra had risen to bathe in the Vitasta on accout of Sradha, a religeous ritual, when some hungry Brahmans approached him and asked for some food.[54] The King declined to oblige them before taking a bath whereupon the Brahmans, through their spiritual power, brought the river before him and said, "Here is the Vitasta. Having it before your eyes give us [now] food".[55] Damodra thinking it to be mere jugglery, insisted he would first take a bath and told the Brahmans to "take yourselves off at once".[56] The angry men cursed him upon which he turned into a snake and would remain so till he heard the whole of *Ramayana*, mythological account of the life and times of Rama, a Hindu god, recited in a single day, a pre-condition impossible for a reptile to fulfil.

Another interesting story is told about a virtuous ruler of ancient times and his equally pious wife, who through their noble deeds and simple life had attained the power to cross the Jhelum by walking over it[57]. Once the queen was overwhelmed by the desire to wear jewellery after she saw a woman laden with ornaments. The King advised her against this but when she persisted with her desire, he gave her a necklace. Next time, wearing the ornament, when she set her foot on the river she began to drown. The terrified queen retreated and rushed to her husband and narrated the incident. The King asked her to remove the necklace and then try to cross the river. She obeyed and crossed the Jhelum with as much ease as she did earlier.

A buffoon ruler, Bom Dev, once 'marked' the spot on the running water of the Jhelum to facilitate his officials to identify the place where his ring had slipped off his finger into the water when he had seen his own image in the river and, in sheer amusement, knocked it with his fist[58]. The ruler marked the spot on water, went to the palace and ordered his men to fish out the ring from the marked spot.

The Jhelum is said to have carried charred bodies of people when the debauchery of their ruler, Nara, invited curse upon him, his city and its people. Nara had cast an evil eye on Candralekha, the beautiful eyed wife of a Brahman. When his persuation and intimidation to fulfil his lust with this daughter of a Naga lord, Susravas, did not work, Nara sent his soldeirs to physically lift her. The couple fled from the rear door of their house and informed the Naga about the wickedness of the King. Naga was burnt with fury and "casting about dense darkness by thundering clouds of sinister look, he burned the King with the town in a rain of fearful thunderbolts".[59] The Vitasta carried the burnt bodies of people whose marrow, blood and fat made the river look as if "adorned with the eyes of peacock's tails".[60]

Mock execution

During the Mughal rule, the Jhelum was once used for a mock execution of an erring soldier. Kashmiris, as history would testify, resented the annexation of their motherland by Mughals and, in fact, also resisted Akbar's earlier moves to grab the Valley. The latter had been eyeing Kashmir for long and after failing in his attempts, it was through sheer deceit that the Great Mughal succeeded in his design. Even though they are not known to have committed such atrocities on their Kashmiri subjects as did their successors, this did not win affection of the local population for the Mughal army.

Akbar's soldiers were, infact, hated for their presence in Kashmir as an occupation army. The Emperor could not ignore this ill will and its possible fall-out and, to avoid an ugly situation from taking place, established an exclusive cantonment for his troops encircled by a high rising wall at the foot of the Hariparbat hillock, known as Naagar Nagar. Whenever the soldiers passed through the streets of the city people would look at them with contempt, sometimes resulting in unpleasant scenes.

At one such occasion, a soldier tortured a civilian which anguished the people. Mirza Askar, son of the Mughal Governor, Yusuf Khan, ordered his arrest but the soldier managed to escape[61]. However, in order to restore peoples' confidence and ensure that other troopers did not indulge in such things, Askar asked for a big boat to be rowed into the middle of the Jhelum and filled it with firewood. Then, as if the guilty soldier was burnt alive inside the boat, put it on fire.

River processions

The importance of the Jhelum took a new turn after the conquest of Kashmir by the Mughals with the first Mughal ruler of the land taking fancy to the river. On his maiden visit when he arrived in Kashmir, Akbar had the first look at Srinagar on the banks of the Jhelum. The Emperor stood on the river bank, saw the position of the city and was greatly astonished[62]. The tradition of river procession in the Jhelum is traced to him even though prior to him, Zain-ul-Abideen would also take boat rides.

Akbar used the river to visit various places in Kashmir. His chronicler, Abul Fazl, writes that the Emperor, during his second and third visit to the Valley, went in a boat to enjoy the saffron blossom at Pampore[63]. He also visited Khanabal and Baramulla in a boat. The King and the ruling elite enjoyed cruising on the Jhelum for which *paranda* (a long luxury boat rowed by several pairs of oars) was used. The *paranda* was followed by smaller boats carrying officials in attendance. Once when Akbar desired to visit south Kashmir, there was no boat available in the city, from amongst a fleet of 30,000 boats, befitting the stature of the Emperor[64]. Orders were accordingly issued for construction of new boats and in no time it looked as if a celestial city had been built on the Jhelum. The nobility and the gentry also got a thousand boats constructed for themselves.

Akbar's son, Jahangir, also loved to take boat rides on the Jhelum. During his journey to the Valley in AD 1620 when he reached Baramulla, decorated boats were waiting for him to cruise upstream to Srinagar. The King recounts the event in his memoirs[65]. He also went to see Verinag and, going up the river in a boat, alighted at Pampore.

Earlier to the annexation of Kashmir by Mughals, Kashmiri rulers were also known to have had joy rides on the

Jhelum though there is no evidence of river processions being taken out then. Yusuf Shah Chak, was a great lover of the Jhelum. He and his poetess queen, Habba Khatoon, used to come down from their palace, situated on the bank of the Jhelum, sit together in a shallop and enjoy skimming down the river.

The Dogra rulers also enjoyed river processions. The *Maharaja* along with his courtiers would embark on a *paranda* and have a merry cruise through the Srinagar city. En route, the state officials would ensure that people greeted the Royality with much festivity. The school children, wearing saffron turbans, and people in general would, as commanded, wave flags and shout '*Maharaja bahadur ki jai* ' (Victory be to the king). The boats and the houses along the river course were decorated with coloured cloths. Maharaja Pratap Singh's entry into Srinagar city every year, between May and June, was a picturesque scene[66]. At Shalteng, in the outskirts of the capital city, he would board a specially decorated *tsakwari* (a boat for high ranking people) along with his *vazirs* and as the boat moved upstream towards Shergarhi, thousands of people would look out from roofs, windows and river ghats. The Jhelum would be littered with *shikaras* moving to and fro.

A river procession, taken out in honour of the Viceroy of India, Lord Reading, and his wife on October 14, 1924 by Maharaja Pratap Singh, gave an occasion to the oppressed Kashmiri Muslims to acquaint the visiting English dignitory with their plight and seek redress. A grand reception had been arranged by the State to receive the Viceroy. He was taken out in a river procession upstream from Shalteng. Thousands of men, women and children had lined up the banks of the Jhelum.

The Muslims, as a mark of protest against the discriminatory treatment meted out to them by the State, had planned a black-flag demonstration. A big black curtain was spread on the shrine of Khanqah-e-Moalla facing the river which the officials got immediately removed. However, as the motor-boat of the Viceroy reached the ghat at Khanqah, a dozen of persons among the crowd put black turbans on their heads and the masses raised slogans 'justice, justice'[67]. As the procession moved upstream, the people followed the Viceroy's boat along the river bank repeating the slogans. A big banner was also unfurled inviting the attention of the visiting dignitary to the "tyranny and desecration of the sacred places" and asking for "British protection"[68].

The people then marched to the Residency Grounds in the uptown city where the Viceroy was lodged and despite being treated to the batons and the kicks of the cops, they presented in an extremely dramatic way a memorandum to the Viceroy. The memorialists were subsequently given different punishments ranging from exile to dismissal from service. Given the kind of oppression the Muslims were undergoing then, the demonstration was a unique event and a significant prelude to the mass movement against the Dogra rule launched seven years later in an organised manner in the wake of the killing of 22 civilians on July 13, 1931.

Hari Singh, the last of the Dogra *maharaja* also loved river processions. He would seat himself in a well decorated *paranda* propelled by several uniformed oarsmen. Small bells were tied onto the oars to produce musical sound in the backdrop of which the *Maharaja* enjoyed the cruise through the capital city. This provided entertainment to the onlookers along the banks of the river. A similar obsession had earned one of the Sikh governors of Kashmir, Diwan Kripa Ram, the nickname of *Kripa Shroni*, (Kripa - the jingle of the bell). His boatrides on the Dal were famous for women paddlers.

In the post-1947 era, the main political party of Kashmir, National Conference, under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah nurtured the tradition of river procession. These processions would start at Sonawar with decorated boats flying party flags and greeted by people in large numbers on either side of the river. The procession would culminate at Chattabal. The National Conference, while in power under Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, arranged river procession receptions of various political leaders visiting Kashmir including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai and Neelam Sanjiva Reddy. Besides the party cadre, people in thousands would watch the procession of boats. In addition to the river processions arranged in honour of various political leaders, the Jhelum is also closely linked with the visits of the front-line leadership of the undivided India. The leaders including Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Abdul Gaffar Khan and Jawahar Lal Nehru have, during their sojourns in the Valley, stayed in house-boats on the Jhelum.

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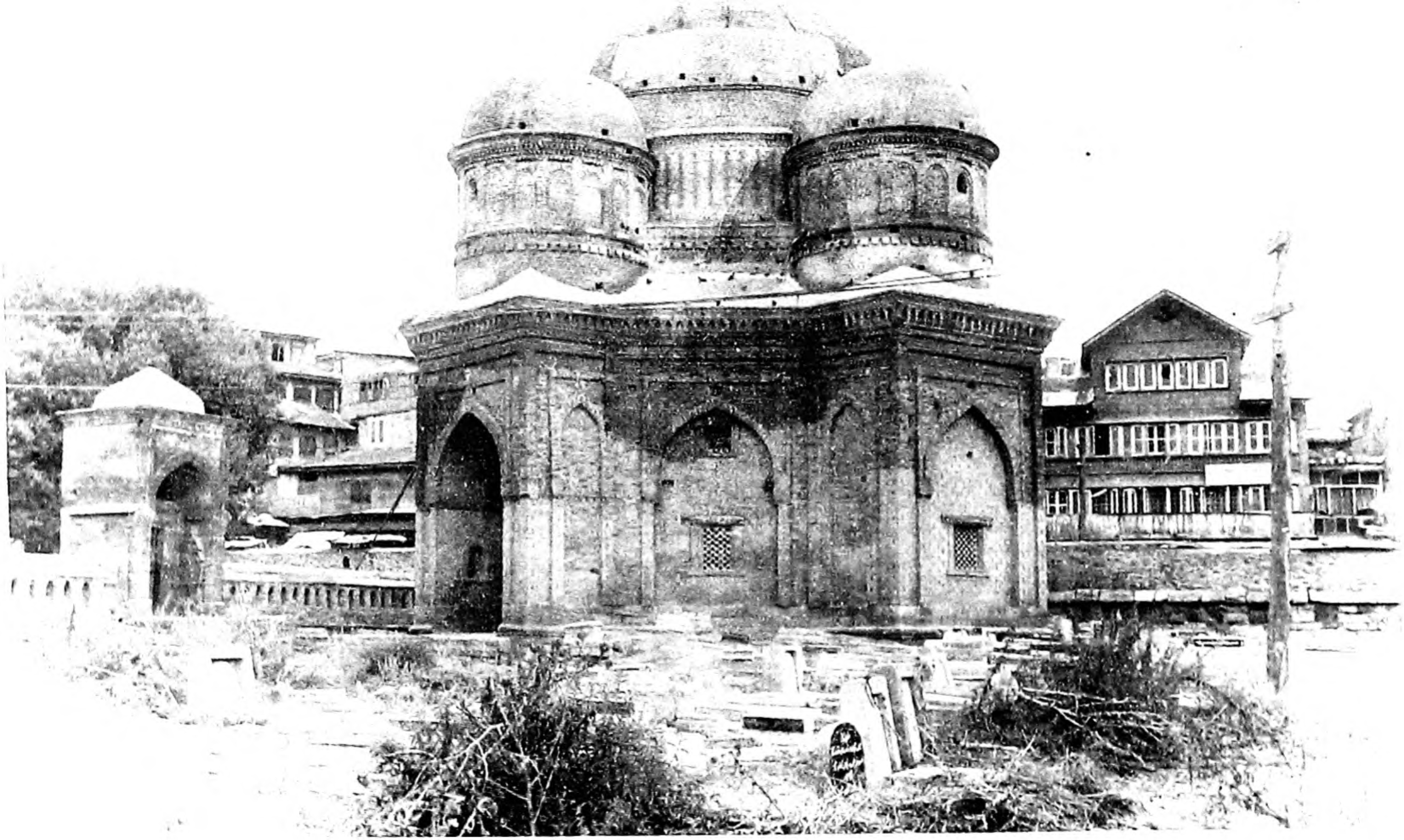


Badshahun Dumath The famous tomb of Sultan Zain-ul-Aabideen's mother on the river bank

THROUGH THE LITERATURE

Kashmir, since ages, has inspired people to eulogise her in prose and poetry. As an important characteristic of the beauty of the Valley, the Jhelum too has received their ample attention. Dating back to several centuries, warm and inspirational references about the river are found in the works of poets, travellers, chroniclers and biographers. The famous chronicler of Kashmir, Kalhana, showers praise on the river. He is a lover of the "cool water of Vitasta"[1] which seems to be running in his thoughts like the ink in his pen. The flow of events in his work is synonymous with that of the Jhelum.

Historians, Jonraja and Hassan, too have eloquently mentioned the river in their chronicles. Hassan, in fact, has given an account of the river and its tributaries as also referred to the floods in and bridges over the Jhelum. Bilhana paints a bewitching picture of the river and its banks. The Mughal Emperor, Akbar, was no less a lover of the river. The '*Ain-e-Akbari*' talks about the *Bihat* and Akbar's boat-rides on it. Jahangir, also finds the river too attractive to ignore frequent mention in his memoirs, '*Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri*'.

The travelogues on Kashmir, authored by eminent persons from different parts of the world, could not but recognise the importance of the river that flows through the land as its main artery. William Moorcroft, Francois Bernier, Fredric Drew, D. J. F. Newall, Walter Lawrence and Tyndale Biscoe are only few such names. The list could be unending and, in fact, if prose and verse were everybody's forte, every single visitor to

Kashmir would jot down his feelings inspired by the Jhelum. Vigne turns a poet in praise of the river :

> *"The line of beauty was never more faithfully depicted in landscape than by the course of the broad and beautiful Jhelum, the "fabulous Hydaspes" of the Augustan Age. So regular, without being too much so, are its windings as it approaches the city (of Srinagar) from the southward; so just are the length and curvature of its sweeps and so well proportioned are its width and the space it occupied, to the extent of the rich savannah through which it flows, so tranquil and lake-like is the surface of the water, that, as first we cannot divest ourselves of the idea that the Nature has called in the assistance of art and has ornamented the scenery beneath us with reference to the most approved principles of landscape gardening"*[2].

Literary significance

The literary significance of the Jhelum cannot be overestimated. Prose and poetry writers have used the river as a symbol representing Kashmir and its times. Verses eloquently describing the beauty of the Jhelum and its contribution in enriching the Kashmir landscape are in abundance. Foreign travellers and pleasure seekers have mentioned with warmth their experiences with the Jhelum and travelogues give beautiful accounts of *shikara* trips on the river.

The earliest of the poems on the river, one could refer to, is the '*Vistasta Mahatyam*'. The author, Bringesh Rishi, has divided the Valley into seven parts along the course of the river. The first begins from Verinag to Vijeshwar (Bijbihara), the second from Vijeshwar to Zewan (Pampore), the third from Zewam to Gagar Giri Teerath (Gagribal), the fourth from Gagar Giri to Seena Nari (Sonawari), the fifth from Seena Nari to Padam Sar (Wular Lake), the sixth from Padam Sar to Barhamulla (Baramulla) and the seventh from Barhamulla to Khadanyar[3].

The oldest eulogy in English, one could lay hand on, is an extract in 'Sketches in Cashmere' or 'Scenes in Cuckoo-Cloud Land' by D. J. F. Newall published in 1882[4]. It is a translated piece. The author of the original work is unknown. The poem had appeared in the Lahore Chronicle of those days. Titled, 'The Jhelum', it describes the characteristic phases of the course of the river. The verses present a beautiful account of the journey of the Jhelum in a lovely backdrop:

> Oh ! merrily the river wanders in the gladsome Maytime
> Of his life, ere yet the morning has deepened into day,-
> No cloud to cast a shadow on the sunshine of his playtime,
> No rock to rough his smoothness as he ripples on his way.
> Oh ! merrily the river flows adown the sunny Valley,
> The golden sand beneath his feet, the laughing sky above him.
> He deems not youth is fleeting, nor begrudges time to dally,
> In the mossy nooks he loves with the dragon flies that love him.
> For his loves - his loves are many. A while he wayward lingers,
> To plait the water-lily's hair and bide among its mazes,
> A moment spares to woo the willow, kiss her dainty fingers,
> Then laughs goodbye, and hastens to play truant with the daisies.
> Where Oorie's cliffs stand sentinel in solitary sadness,
> I saw the river once again - the same, yet not the same.
> I had seen him in his cradle, when every look spoke gladness,
> I had known him in his childhood, now I knew him but by name.
> For no more I saw the sunny brow, where laughter seemed to twinkle
> In every fugitive ripple that dimpled to the wind.
> Now care had graven many or a line, and row many a wrinkle,
> And every passing cloud, methought, had left its gloom behind.
> With vengeance in his hollow voice he hurls a wild defiance
> To rocks that fret him as swirls in maddened surges past,
> But a sad, soft something lurks beneath that haughty self-reliance,
> Like the wild wail the seaman hears in the fury of the blast.
> He flings his weary arms aloft. In truth he is a weary
> Of this life that seems unending, this battle never won;

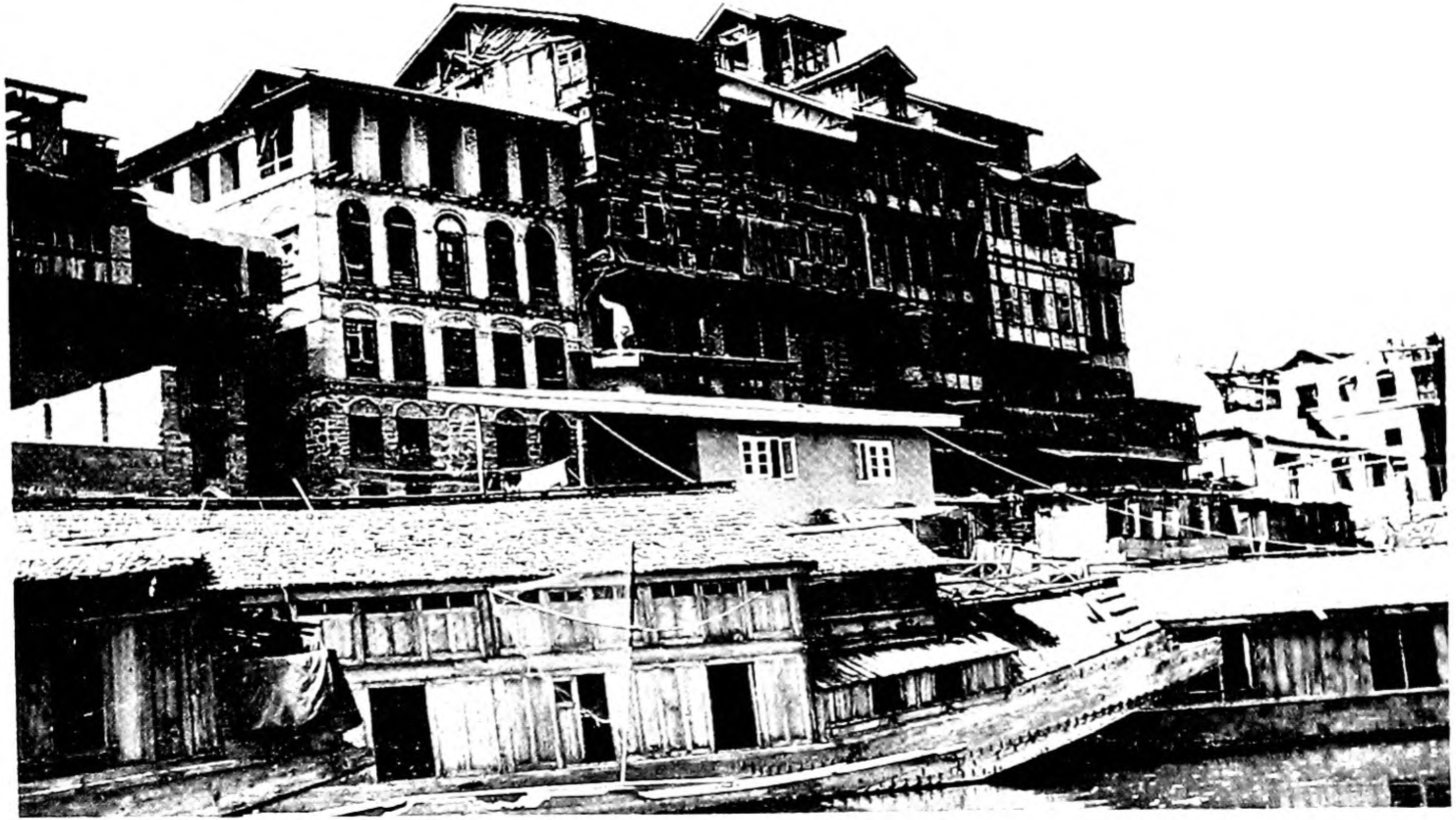
And the day that closes round him is overcast and dreary,
And the morrow will be but another toilsome strife begun.
But ere I turned me from the bank I marked a sunbeam quiver
(Like a guardian angel) down a fir tree's over-arching brow.
Then again I knew him. For in every tint some old reflection
Of ruddy snows, or morning clouds, or emerald grass was peeping,
That had sunk into his soul, and these were but the recollection,
The awakening of forgotten joys, of joys not dead but sleeping.
Thus memory flings round after years the glamour of her roses,
And waked amid Life's darkest days the light of happier hours;
She wafts across the misty Past the breath of childhood's posies,
And weaves in winter's hoary locks a chaplet of spring flowers.

The flying cranes

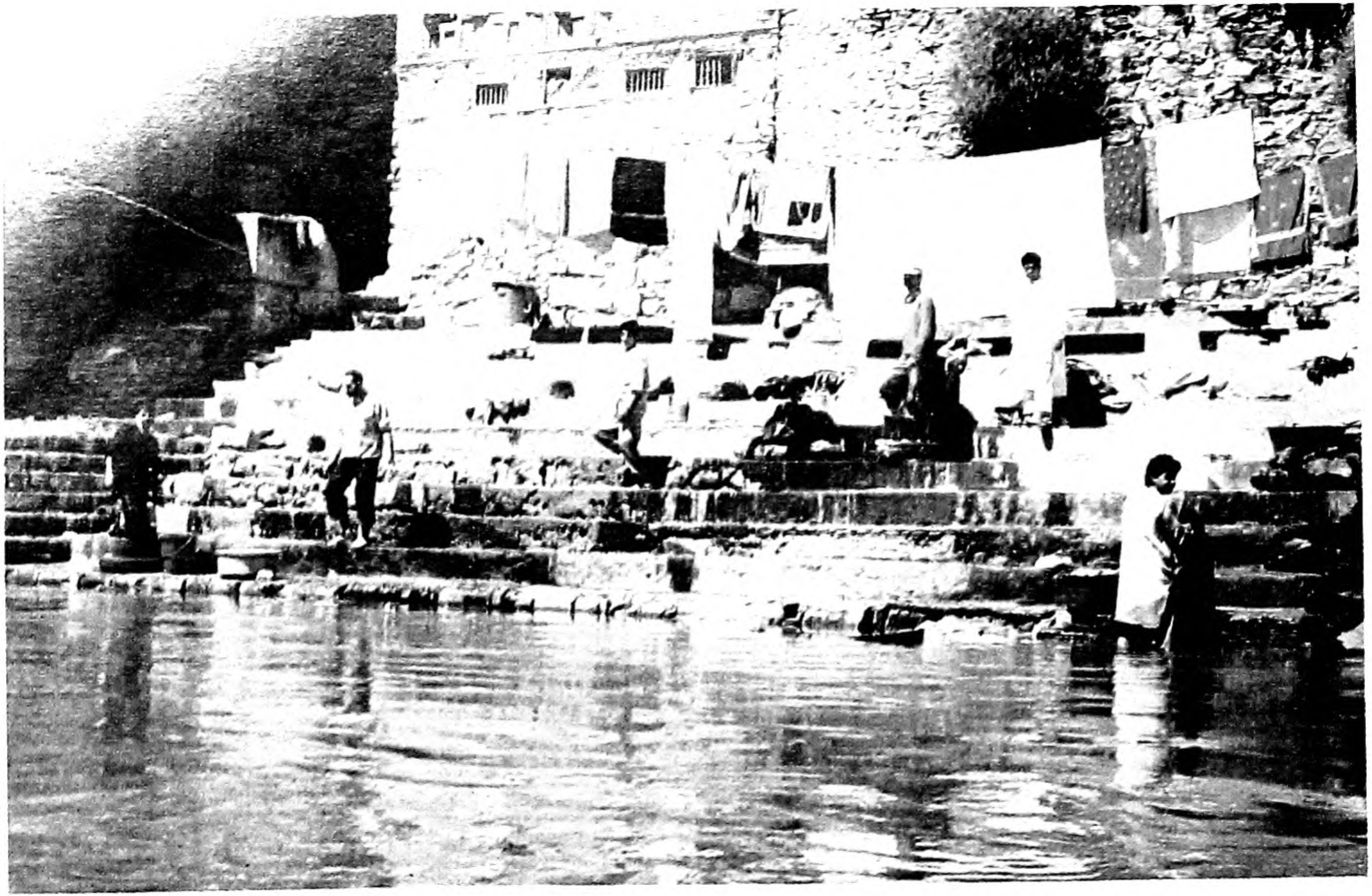
The Jhelum has inspired, among several poets of repute, no less a person than the Noble laureate Rabinder Nath Tagore, who, during his stay in Srinagar in the autumn of 1915, wrote some wonderful poems depicting the bewitching characteristics of the “apparels in celestial light”,[5] that he thought Kashmir was. The charms of its river could not but touch his poetic sensibilities. In his famous poem, “The Flying Cranes”, he writes:

Glittering in the evening glow
The curving current of the Jhelum
Paled in the darkness-shut in a sheath
Like a scimitar.

At the end of the ebb of the day
The flood of night brought stars
Like flowers floating on its backwaters
Beneath the banks of darkening hills
Stood row on row of deodars
Creations seemed to seek self utterance.



Old houses along the course of the Jhelum through the capital city of Srinagar



Washermen at work at a Jhelum ghat.

The rows of willows on the banks of the Jhelum, now a rare sight consequent to their wanton felling for commercial purpose, also inspired Tagore and he composed yet another famous poem, '*Manasi*'. Here is an extract :

> Today in the morning sky
> Dewdrops like tears do glisten
> Willows on the river edge
> In sunlight dangle and shiver
> Closer and closer they come
> Crowding into the poet's heart.[6]

It would be in place to mention that the two poems are rated amongst the best of Tagore's poetic works.

Ms Percy Brown describes a typical scene on the banks of the Jhelum in Srinagar and elsewhere in the Valley:

> With graceful steps, erect and slow,
> Adown the stone-built broken stair,
> The Panditanis daily go,
> And on their heads held high, they bear,
> Bright vessels, which they stooping fill....
> Then with their slender rounded arms,
> They poise the shinning lotas high,
> In pherans-robed, whose soft folds show
> Tints dyed by rays of sunset warm,
> Flame, crimson, organise, rose aglow.[7]

Urdu poets have also eulogised the River of Kashmir in their verses. Ali Sardar Jafri's '*Jhelum Ka Tarana*'[8] (The Song of the Jhelum) could well be rated with the famous English poem, The Brook, so far as the imagery and the rhythm of the verses are concerned:

> *Maanand-e-jooye zindagi sham-o-sehar behta hoon main*
> *Har dam rawan, har dam dawan, har dam jawan rehta hoon main*
> *Waadi main lehrata hua*
> *Sabze pe ithlata hua*

Sow pech-o-kham khaata hua
Hansta hua, gaata hua

(Like the stream of life, I move on day and night, running through the Valley, playing with the grass, taking a hundred curves, laughing and singing; always youthful, I move on.)

In the post-1953 Kashmir All India *mushairas* (poetic symposia) were regularly held where Urdu poets would vie with one another to write poems glorifying the beauty of Kashmir. Some poems of those times were exclusively written about the Jhelum. Thus wrote Jaffar Ali Khan Asar[9]:

Jhelum ke dam-e-subh woh dilchasp nazare
Billore baha jata hai kirnoon ke sahare
Kheti ka woh jhuk jhuk kay har ik moj se kehna
Chhati se lagalun agar aajao kinare

(The Jhelum presents eye-catching scenes in the morning. Sunrays make its water flow like crystal. Through its course, the standing crops in the fields bow as if to say to the waves of the river : Come nearer and we will embrace you).

Rawish Siddiquee in his '*Ae Jhelum*'[10] (O, Jhelum) reminds the river about the Mughal Emperor Salim (Jahangir) and his beloved Mehrun Nisa (Noor Jahan) who were great lovers of Nature and "whose glittering palaces were once on your banks". Kashmir, he tells the Jhelum, has not forgotten their tales to which "you are a witness":

Salim-o-Mehr husne shahid-o-qudrat ke parwane
Zar afshan the tere sahil pe ik din jin ke kashane
Nahi bhoola tera Kashmir ab tak jin ke afsane
Jinhe chhup chhup ke dekha tha teri cheshme tamama ne

Qayoom Nazar[11] is head over heels in love with the Jhelum and would value it with his life. He loves the valley, lakes, ponds and admits that its flowing water runs intoxication into his veins:

Is ki waadi, jheelen, chesme mujh ko jaan se pyare hain
Is ke phele kinare apne hathoon main ne sanware hain

Meri rag rag mai dodata hai masti anjani
Jhelum ka betha paani

Anwar Sabri, in his poem, 'Janat-e-Kashmir'[12] (The Paradise of Kashmir), says that as the admirers of the youthful beauty of Kashmir, the waves of the Jhelum play *rabab* (musical instrument) in praise of the paradise that is Kashmir:

Ban ke tere qaseeda khan-e-shabab
Moj-e-Jhelum baja rahi hai rabab

So far as the Persian poetry is concerned, no other country figures in it as profusely as Kashmir[13]. One would, however, like to refer only to a quatrain of an unknown poet in praise of the Jhelum as reproduced by Dr. G. M. D. Sufi in his book, 'Kashir'[14]. The quatrain sums up the bounties of the river and the gratitude the poet reciprocates in verse:

Kard sairaab khita-e-Punjab
Aab-e-Jhelum nishan-e-Kashmir ast
Dar tan-e-murdgan rawan bashad
Ein ki aab-e-rawan-e-Kashmir ast

(The water of the Jhelum, the symbol of Kashmir, irrigated Punjab. Such is the water flowing from Kashmir that it runs life through the dead).

Suggestive symbol

Nearer home, the Kashmiri poets have been greatly influenced by the Jhelum, a fact reflected in their poetry. The river has been one of the recurrent themes in Kashmiri poetry. The Jhelum stands for continuity, endurance and the persistence of the Kashmiri identity and Kashmiri singularity. Accordingly, poets have used it as a symbol of objective correlative while giving expression to their consciousness of identity and singularity. "Nothing could be more suggestive a symbol among the things of common observation than the Jhelum while poets try to produce a picture of eternity against the flux of the temporary and the transient"[15].

In modern times, the Jhelum has acquired a new dimension with Kashmiri poets using it as a symbol of motion and change. The harbingers of the modern Kashmiri poetry used the river as a metaphor for expressing their fervour to welcome new ideas of social revolution aiming at restoration of human dignity and equality. "With the decline of the Progressive Movement, Kashmiri poets saw in the flow of the Jhelum profounder lessons of life like consciousness of continuity of Kashmiri identity"[16]. In contemporary modern Kashmiri poetry also, the Jhelum is often used as a symbol of this consciousness as also of duration of time against the transience of individual lives.

Vitasta - the opera

Although there are only a few exclusive poems on the river in Kashmiri literature, like the one by Dina Nath Nadim and another by Abdul Ahad Azad, the Kashmiri poets have, nevertheless, drawn their imagery from the Jhelum. They have frequently used the river as an allegory to express themselves. Dina Nath Nadim's opera, *'Vitasta'*, is undoubtedly a work of great literary value. The poet has used the Jhelum as a cultural symbol emerging as the representative of Kashmir's glorious values. *'Vitasta'*, a successful blend of ballet and opera, is a good piece of mythology building. The opera is a love story of the river Jhelum and the Wular Lake in which the poet has drawn characters both from mythology and physical history of Kashmir.

Vyath or *Vitasta* is a sixteen year old damsel whose father, *Neel Nag* (mythological name of Verinag), is the ruler of *Maraz*, south Kashmir. She falls in love with *Wular*, a twenty-five year old prince of *Kamraz*, north Kashmir. *Vitasta* confides in her bosom friends *Sindh*, *Lidder* and *Romshi*, the tributaries of the Jhelum, who take the news to *Neel Nag* in the hope that the King would agree to the union of *Vitasta* and *Wular*. *Neel Nag* objects to the love affair of his daughter with someone out of their clan but seeing the persistence of his daughter, ultimately gives in.

The opera begins with the scene of the celebration of *Vyathtruvah*, the birthday of *Vitasta*:

Eand eand baal wogein, thazi kaari
Yath reshwari Vitasta raechh
Bane raet raet path wan, wane yaari
Yath reshwari Vitasta raechh

(With lofty mountains around raising their heads high, *Vitasta* is the guardian of this Garden of Saints (Kashmir). The pine trees in the jungles are standing firm on the ground. *Vitasta* is the guardian of this Garden of Saints).

Vyath maer menz khaetch preth akis taari
Raze te paadshah thaewith gosh
Laltadit beye Badshah gaari
Yath reshwari Vitasta raechh

(Everyone fell in love with *Vitasta*. The kings are all ears to her. Laltadita and Badshah (Zain-ul-Abideen) look out for her. *Vitasta* is the guardian of this Garden of Saints).

The opera, available in book form also, was staged by the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in and outside Kashmir. One such show was staged in New Delhi on February 7, 1977 and many leading newspapers published favourable reviews[17].

Before Nadim's *Vitasta*, however, one finds a Kashmiri *mathnavi* (a poetic form), *Aagar Nama*, by Ghulam Mohammad Lone written in 1932. Though the *mathnavi* is not related with the Jhelum as such, it gives an account of its tributaries and sources, symbolising these as seven kings and seven queens. Like the seven spiritual fountain-heads of Kashmir, namely the shrines of Hazratbal, Makhdoom Sahab, Naqashband Sahab, Dastagir Sahab, Khanqah-e-Moalla, Charar-e-Sharief and Jamia Masjid, vitalising the spiritual Kashmir, these water sources irrigate and contribute to the flourishing of the physical Kashmir. Nadim, in fact, seems to have been influenced by the poetic sensibility available in the *Aagar Nama*. For instance, while Lone refers to a stream as *Raaze koor* (the princess), Nadim calls Vitasta (Jhelum) by the same name. Lone's verse '*Aagarbalnei* *maenze raath*' and Nadim's '*Az vitastaye maenze raath*' is another striking similarity between the two poetic works.

Revolutionary poet and critic, Abdul Ahad Azad, composed an exclusive poem, '*Vyath*', in praise of the river, terming it as 'the beautiful fairy of Verinag':

Vernagech maer menz parye
Sonderye boz mein zaar
Indrazen maha sonderye
Chon maluin talpataal
Heinde reinde chaen namaverye
Sonderye boz mein zaar

(O! the beautiful fairy of Verinag,
Charming! Lend me thine ear,
The most attractive of females in Inder's court,
Your birthplace is subterranean,
Your fame transcends boundaries,
Charming! Lend me thine ear)

Sodre balech mas malareye,
Yut kaih chhoi son amar
Chhaikh tse yiwan buke barbarye
Sonderye boz mein zaar.

(A pitcherful from the ocean of wine!
What makes you love us so much
That you are overwhelmed with tears.
Charming! Lend me thine ear).

Chhakhai sorgah pori lolarye
Door zanmeik sagnawaan
Chani darshane sar ti gayi sarye
Sonderye boz mein zaar.

(Beautiful! You irrigate the beds of life,
In the paradise.
The lakes overflow with joy on seeing you,
Charming! Lend me thine ear).

Seat baej chhi dechhin khowurye

Khanabal pethe Khadenyar
Paan aalewaan pyale berberye
Sonderye boz mein zaar.

(From Khanabal to Khadanyar,
You are flanked by companions,
With cupfuls of drink, they lay down their lives for you,
Charming! Lend me thine ear).

Gyaan duitnai panin aagerye,
Tha sedrus loyuth paan
Mile tsaruk naad karkerye
Sonderye boz mein zaar.

(Attaining knowledge from your source,
You jumped into the deep sea,
Calling for brotherhood.
Charming! Lend me thine ear).

The river has received its share of eulogy from the folk literature of Kashmir also. Folk songs, in praise of the Jhelum, sung by a love-lorn damsel separated from her beloved, are a part of the local literature. Thus goes a song describing the Jhelum as the 'River of Love':

Come to my Jhelum, shepherd please,
To cause thy sheep's thirst appease.
All my boats would I illuminate
To manifest thy coming, dear mate
Come to my Jhelum, shepherd please,
To cause thy sheep's thirst appease.

Green grass, with love's water do I keep,
O, Come and feed thy goats and sheep,
Come to my Jhelum, shepherd please,
To cause thy sheep's thirst appease.

O, thou slow motioned Jhelum!
For thee let me devote my all, O, Jhelum!
How great is thy stateliness, O, Jhelum!
For thee let me devote my all, O, Jhelum!

Take me, take me, O, boatman to your bank
O, here flows the Jhelum, the deep River of Love.
My boat takes only the pair in love
O, here flows the Jhelum the deep River of love.

The banks of the Jhelum I will illuminate today
O, our groom will come in a *shikara* today,
The whole of Kashmir I'll illuminate today
O, our groom will come in a shikara today.[18]

Apart from making the Jhelum as the subject of their poetry, local poets have used some of its facets like a ghat or a bridge as a vehicle to convey their feelings. Famous romantic poet, Rasul Mir, used the Khanabal ghat as an allegory to say that his beloved had made public his love for her:

Badnam kor thas Khanabal kis ghatas

He also penned a poem, '*Matta Haenzen*', a lady of the *Matta hanji* house-hold. Likewise, Abdul Ahad Nazim wrote a poem on Khanabal Bridge :

Khanabal kedlas saalar terye (The marriage party has crossed the Khanabal bridge).

Among the contemporaries, Amin Kaamil has versified the Zero Bridge in a poem of the same name. The poem is rendered into English by Dr. Shafi Shauq[19]. Here are some excerpts :

This is the 'Zero Bridge'
Away from the city and its hubbub,
Rapt in meditation of the tranquil mesa,
A recluse, solitary, and stripped.

Poised on the embankment are the same-sized poplars,
As ready in a row for Idd-prayers;
There, those silent and white house-boats
Are being loved in the light of the waning moon,
In the eddies of the Vyath
Powdered silver glistens.

There at the top of the mountain is a temple
Man in all times,
Erects thrones for his Lover at heights,
Lord, you deserve all praise,
Make the dew-drops shine as stars.

Can at this hour my oblivious love
Remember me in his dreams?
In early spring
Even the fruitless willow sprouts.

Nature too has a penchant for art,
Shadows, give rise to a variety of patterns;
What are we, but the colour of patterns
That lose our lustre slowly in sunshine?

There will be a day when shadows will vanish
A monochrome light will converge in a dot,
And, over the Vyath of life, away from the hubbub
Every person will become a 'Zero Bridge'.

Taking some leaves from the history of Kashmir, noted play-wrights, Akhtar Mohi-ud-din, Som Nath Zutshi and Ali Mohammad Lone, wrote a drama series, '*Te Vyath Rooz Pakaan*' (And Quiet Flows the Jhelum). The play, in the backdrop of the Dogra tyranny, depicts the institution of covree and its devastation on the lives of Kashmiris. The authors used the Jhelum to symbolise the element of time in the flow of unfortunate events related to the history of Kashmir. It was serialised by the Srinagar stations of Radio Kashmir and Doordarshan and became very popular.

Writer and political activist, Prem Nath Bazaz wrote a book on the illustrious ladies of Kashmir titled 'The Daughters of Vitasta'. From amongst the local Urdu fiction writers, Prem Nath Pardesi wrote a collection of short stories, *Behte Chirag* (The Flowing Lamps), with the Jhelum as the central theme. Short stories by Hamidi Kashmiri (*Bahar Aaney Tak*) and Pushkar Nath (*Pul Number Sifar Ke Gidh*) as also one (*Jhelum Ki Lehroon Par*) by noted Urdu fiction writer, Krishan Chander speak of the agonies and ecstasies of the people living on the

Jhelum. Krishan Chander's short story is, in fact, rated as one of his excellent works.

Influence on Kashmiri language

The Jhelum has also influenced the Kashmiri language with some phrases and proverbs associated with the river having become a part of the language. Proverbs like '*Yarbal kaken*' and '*Gaeri ghat*' owe their origin to the river. While the first means a bosom friend or a person with whom one would regularly meet at *yarbal*, the other refers to a situation where a person has migrated to a place where no facilities, as available on a ghat, are there.

A phrase, '*Gayi ho gayi ho Zainakadale*' is also linked with the Jhelum. The phrase whose English equivalent would be 'Much ado about nothing', originates from an incident where an idle man was standing on the Zaina Kadal, a famous bridge over the Jhelum in downtown Srinagar, looking down at the pacing waters. Suddenly he thought of befooling people, spat into the river and cried '*Gai ho, gayi ho*' (It is gone, it is gone). People assembled in scores to see what was drowning but could not see anything. When asked what was it, the man pointed towards the flowing Jhelum and said '*thok*' (sputum).

Another famous Kashmiri phrase, '*Koor gobur gov Zainakadal*', is used when people look for eligible matches for their children to get married. In the Valley, there is an age-old custom to visit the house, on one pretext or the other, of the family likely to be chosen for the relationship. The members of the family searching an alliance also go into the house to see the would-be bride or groom, as the case may be, to satisfy themselves about everything before the alliance matures and the wedding is held. The host family does not mind the visit by strangers as it is believed that, like in case of the Zaina Kadal which anyone can go and see, a girl or a boy for whom a life-partner is being searched, is also for anyone to see and convince oneself about his or her looks.

Khabri Zaina Kadal is yet another phrase used for a fabricated news.

Other proverbs and phrases supposed to have been gifted to Kashmiri language by the Jhelum include '*Vyathe balek nethe nani*' (people in shreds or poor people), '*Vyathi gatchun*' (To go waste), '*Vathe waav*' (Tempest) and '*Vyathi huind yaavun Haar te Shravun, Kori huind yaavun bab ti moj*' (The River attains its youth during Summer and Monsoon even as the girl attains puberty at her maternal home).

Another connection of the Jhelum with the languages was the *Dar-ul-Tarjama* established by the Dogra ruler, Ranbir Singh, in the third quarter of the 19th century on the banks of the river at Maharaj Ganj. The institution was engaged in translation and printing, in Hindi, of standard works on Hindu religion with the object of "spreading knowledge of classical Hindu learning among the ruler's Dogra subjects"[20]. Persian and Arabic works on history, philosophy and other subjects were also translated into Sanskrit with the assistance of learned *moulvis*. According to the Administration Report of AD 1873, Ranbir Singh spent Rs. 17,737 on translation work[21] when the total expenditure on education in Srinagar was slightly more than Rs. 32,000.

In the 20th century, the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages too was set-up on the right bank of the Jhelum. The Academy, as its name suggests, was established to promote art, culture and languages of the State and over the years it has done a great service in the field including publishing hundreds of books on history, culture, poetry, archaeology and other areas of fine arts. The Academy is also publishing periodicals in Kashmiri, Urdu, Dogri, Pahari, Gojri, Hindi and English.

There could be no denying the fact that the Jhelum enjoys the same place in the life and history of Kashmir as the Nile and the Ganges do in Egypt and India, respectively. The rich history of the Valley and her beauty are closely linked with its flow. The leisurely pace of its waters through the bewitching landscape of Kashmir has won a million hearts for her. But alas! Over the years, it has lost that magic look. During the last five decades in particular, its deteriorating water quality and physical degradation has left the river but a mere shadow of its past glory. The poets and writers no longer seem to draw inspiration from it except perhaps when to express dismay over its present status. Hakim Manzoor, for instance, is at a loss to convince his children that the Jhelum was not always a stream of unclean waters and filthy banks. The river, he reasons with them, once flowed brimful with crystal clear water:

Yeh Jhelum pur moj tha is ka paani chaandi jaisa tha
Mera yeh kehna bachhoon ko ik afsana lagta hai

or

Logo! lab kholo, kuch bolo Jhelum kyon matyala hai
Maine jab is ko dekha tha, yeh tha ik aayeena sa

(O, people! Break your silence and tell me why the Jhelum looks muddy. When I had seen it last, the river looked clean as a mirror).

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BRIDGING THE BANKS

Alexander would decidedly have won the battle against Porus sooner than he did if there was a bridge over the Jhelum in the plains of Punjab where the two fought each other four thousand years ago. The valiant Greek had to expend much time and energy in finding a place where his troops eventually crossed the river, pounced on the native ruler and defeated him. For centuries, the later rulers did not think of bridging the Jhelum. During the Hindu period, construction of bridges over rivers was unknown. The ancient monuments found at Martand and Awantipore are evidence enough to show that giant stone blocks were used in Kashmir as building material but no trace of such masonry skills are available across the Valley with regard to bridge construction.

The non-existence of permanent bridges in Kashmir during ancient days is also reflected in a verse in Rajatarangini where Lostadhara, the wretch, in the hope to gratify the king, tells him, "Let the villages, the gold and other property bestowed upon Kalasesvara (the temple of Shiva) be taken away. With the stones of that temple I shall build you a bridge over the Vitasta"[1]. The rivers were crossed by means of boats rather than bridges until the advent of the Muslim rule when the two banks of the Jhelum were permanently connected by bridges.

Boat-bridges

In the Hindu period, the nearest to the bridge construction was the *nausetu* (boat-bridge). The *Vitasta*

Mahatyma contained in the *Nilmata Purana*, refers to bridges over the Vitasta but does not elucidate their formation[2]. It is probable that the reference is to the boat-bridges as the construction of the first such bridge is credited to Praversena II who ruled Kashmir in the 6th century AD when the *Nilmata* is believed to have been composed. According to Kalhana, Praversena had the *Brahatsetu* (Great Bridge) constructed on the Jhelum[3]. Only since then is the construction of such bridges known in Kashmir. The *nausetu* were constructed by permanently anchored barges (big boats), tied together with ropes and chains, across the river at chosen places. Large timber sleepers were then spread over the barges to facilitate free movement of men and material.

The peculiar thing about the boat-bridges or *jasar,* as these are referred to in Persian chronicles[4], was that at the time of an invasion by an enemy the boats were untied, removed and the river made impossible for the invaders to cross. An alert defender, in the face of a threat, would first of all remove the boat-bridge leading to his camp. If he failed to act in time it could mean disaster for him as happened with Harsh Dev, the ruler of Kashmir between AD 1089 and 1101, whose *Mahasetu*, built for his own benefit, served in the end the enemy's advantage and the King was defeated[5].

In AD 1319, Tartar warlord, Dulchu or Zulchu as he was called by local historians, accompanied by a 60,000 strong mounted force invaded Kashmir and destroyed cities, towns and villages. The chronicles also record destruction of boat-bridges on the Jhelum by his troops.

The 'Tareekh-i-Rasheedi', a chronicle in Persian, counts about thirty boat-bridges laid across the Jhelum at different places, of which there were seven in the Srinagar city alone[6].

One wonders if Baron Hugel means the permanent wooden bridges over the Jhelum when he refers to these in AD 1835 as "antiquity of atleast 500 years"[7], for there is no evidence of permanent bridges over the river before AD 1419 when Ali Shah, the then ruler of Kashmir, built the first bridge in the heart of the Srinagar city. Hugel's assertion that these bridges were found already laid across the river by Mohammadans (Muslims as referred to by Europeans) is indeed misleading. Equally unfounded is the claim by Tyandale Biscoe who attributes the introduction of the old cantilever bridges into Kashmir to Alexander's officers[8].

The fact that most of the bridges in Srinagar are even today named after the Muslim rulers, beginning with Ali Shah, points to the origin of regular bridges to the Muslim rule. One can find an explanation for this in the fact that the engineers of the Hindu period, who were so proficient in stone architecture, could not construct stone bridges demanding sufficient span. "For their Muslim successors working chiefly in wood, it was easier to overcome this difficulty"[9]. The bridges constructed by the Muslim rulers were made of deodar not only because of its availability in abundance in the Valley but also for its resistance to rot in water where it is said to remain unaffected for at least half a century.

The construction of wooden bridges over the Jhelum involved two techniques with little variance. Initiated by the engineers of the Muslim rulers, these were followed for several centuries until modern concrete bridges began spanning the river. In the first case, large square boxes of deodar filled with stones were sunk in the bed of the river over one another until a height above the low water level was reached for pier construction.

According to the second technique, old barges filled with stones were drowned at the site of pier construction[10]. Piles were then driven and more boats sunk till the low water level was reached. Consequent to this, wooden trestles of deodar logs were constructed by placing rough-hewn logs at right angles till the structure attained the requisite height to allow a house-boat to pass beneath. After this, the deodar logs were cantilevered. The technique reduced the span and huge trees were made to serve as girders to support the roadway.

The boat-sinking technique for bridge construction is believed to have been inspired by the building of an island on the Wular lake by Zain-ul-Aabideen by adopting this method. In the later years, the sinking of boats and wooden boxes was replaced by a relatively modern technique adopted to form the foundation of a pier. A triangular space, with its apex streamwards, was formed in the river bed by strong stakes well driven down and covered with planks on the outside to a height of eight feet". The space was then filled with stones and formed the foundation of the pier.

The piers consisted of alternate layers of deodar trunks, each placed above a foot apart with each succeeding layer broader than the previous one and laid at right angles to it. The trunks were fastened together at their ends by strong wooden pegs. The piers were then united by long and stout deodar trunks, stretching across, from one to another laid about two feet apart. The platform consisted of rough planks or slender poles closely laid across the trunks connecting the piers and fastened at each end by wooden pegs. Finally, a coating of grass and earth was spread over the platform and a railing erected on either side of the so constructed bridge. Subsequently, when *Macadam bitamus* began to be used in road construction in Kashmir, the wooden bridges also got the metallic surface instead of that of grass and earth.

The wooden bridges constructed by driving down deodar planks into the river bed were different from the other two types involving sinking of boats and boxes only in so far as construction of pier foundation was concerned. The other aspects of the bridge building remained the same. The driving-down technique was relatively modern, economic, efficient and less cumbersome in comparison with the earlier two methods. Thus we see the technique being employed sometime beyond the construction of the first concrete bridge over the Jhelum at least where the dilapidated bridges were sought to be repaired. Alongside the construction of wooden piers, some bridges were built on brick and stone piers also like the old Amira Kadal, dismantled in 1980s.

During the Muslim and Dogra rule, small bridges or culverts were constructed over nallas and streams using brick and stone. The bricks were of the size of 4 x 3 x 1.5 inches, commonly known as *maharaji seer*, and were used with brick-powder, lime, curd and jute as the binding material. It would take some time to set but when it did, the construction was solid as a rock. The arch type culverts so built are now a rare sight in Kashmir although we have some specimens of these in the form of Jogi Lankar culvert over a channel in the Dal lake in downtown Srinagar and Woonta Kadal on the Nishat-Rainawari link road running on the lake.

The secret of stability of the wooden bridges may perhaps be attributed to the skeleton piers offering little or no resistance to the large volume of water brought down at flood time[12]. The peculiar cantilever construction of these bridges has attracted the attention of all foreign travellers. There is hardly any travelogue missing description of these bridges. The Mughal rulers also found them too imposing to ignore their mention in their accounts.

During his march into Kashmir on the road along the Jhelum, Jahangir gives a brief account of bridge making in the area. According to him, "the bridges in this country are made by throwing pine trees on the surface of the water, and fasten the two ends strongly to rocks, and having thrown to these, thick planks of wood, make them firm with pegs and ropes, and these with a little repair last for years"[13]. Jahangir is undoubtedly talking about culverts laid over rivulets and mountain torrents by employing the same method in the countryside Kashmir even today.

The wooden bridges introduced by the Muslim rulers were cheap, effective and picturesque. What is more interesting is that their construction was ingenious. During the Dogra rule, a steel bridge was for the first time constructed over the Jhelum at Kohala. Built by the English engineers, it was called Pratap Pul or Pratap Bridge after the then ruler Pratap Singh. The bridge connected the Jhelum Valley road with the Rawalpindi Road. The Dogras also constructed another steel bridge at Domel.

Rope bridges

In the 19th and the early 20th century, rope bridges also spanned the Jhelum. There were several such bridges over the river downstream from Baramulla. The bridges consisted of three ropes made of hazel twigs, slung from stout poles from one side of the river to the other. One rope was for the traveller's feet and one on each side, four feet above the foot-rope, for his hands. All three ropes were joined together about every six feet by V-shaped branches. These bridges were "wonderfully strong"[14] though looking so frail. During a blowing wind a traveller on the ropes could imagine "what a spider must feel like on its web in a gale"[15].

The fear of the roaring waters below was so great that women generally crossed blindfolded on the backs of men. Biscoe also gives an account of the one-strand bridge of leather over the Jhelum. On the rope was poised a V-shaped stick upside down, with a loop of rope at each extremity of the V through which the traveller put his legs and hang on with one hand to the stick, and with the other pulled a lanyard which ran through a pulley on the opposite side. The impetus with which one descended to the sag of the rope took one some of the way up and the rest of the journey was accomplished by the aid of the lanyard. The villagers took across this rope goats and ponies after they tied their four legs and hung them from the V-shaped runner. Many people would perish in these crossings as the villagers used them till they broke. Some times there were five to six men on these ropes when they gave in, throwing all of them into the raging river and breaking them into pieces on the rocks[16].

From using a wooden log over a narrow channel of water or laying of a *nausetu*, the bridge engineering in Kashmir has come a long way to reach the modern technique of building pre-stressed bridges. The science has developed both intensively and extensively. Like in the case of earlier permanent bridges, the construction of pre-stressed bridges involves pile foundation for pier construction as the first step. The piles are generally driven vertically or in near vertical position and the materials commonly used are cast-iron, cement concrete and steel.

The Reinforced Cement Concrete (R.C.C.) piles are popular and are divided into two types of cast-in-situ concrete piles and pre-cast concrete piles[17]. In the first case, a bore is dug into the ground by inserting a casing. The bore is then filled with cement concrete after placing reinforcement, if any. If the casing is kept in position, the piles are known as cased cast-in-situ concrete piles and if the casing is withdrawn, these are known as uncased cast-in-situ piles. The pre-cast piles are manufactured in factories and then driven into the ground. The construction of R.C.C. and pre-stressed concrete girder bridges is similar to that of R.C.C. buildings with framework, placing and curing being the usual steps for cast-in-situ work and in pre-cast construction. Units are erected in position on staging with the help of derricks or cranes.

Pre-stressed girders are often pre-cast. A pre-stressed bridge has many advantages over the R.C.C. bridges whose construction in Kashmir began in 1964. Because of pre-stressing, concrete does not crack which reduces the possibility of steel corrosion. Besides, material is saved by as much as 50 per cent since full advantage is taken of high compressive strength of concrete[18].

Varying number

The number of bridges over the Jhelum has varied from time to time. Akbar's chronicler, Abul Fazl, refers to bridges, made of wood and stones, over the Jhelum and other streams but does not give their number. Jahangir, gives the number of the bridges in the city (Srinagar) as four and describes them as "very strong stone and wooden bridges over which people come and go"[19].

The 17th century French traveller and physician, Francois Bernier who came to Kashmir as a member of Emperor Aurangzeb's entourage, notices only two bridges over the Jhelum in the city[20] while George Forster observes that there were four or five bridges[21]. Bernier seems to have erred in counting only two bridges over the Jhelum. Between Jahangir and Aurangzeb, Kashmir was ruled by Shah Jahan, a great builder whose love for construction is known world over. It is only reasonable to assume that during his reign the number of bridges in Kashmir would have increased rather than decreased as Bernier's account would convey. By the time Aurangzeb died in AD 1707, there were as many as six bridges over the Jhelum in the city of Srinagar alone, besides an equal number outside from Bijbihara in the south to Baramulla in the north.

From the construction of the first bridge in Kashmir in AD 1419, five bridges had been built over the river across the Valley by the turn of the century. In the following century, two more bridges were constructed over the Jhelum. The 17th century saw another four bridges being added between Bijbihara and the strong"[14] though looking so frail. During a blowing wind a traveller on the ropes could imagine "what a spider must feel like on its web in a gale"[15].

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During the Muslim rule (AD 1320-1819) in Kashmir, the Jhelum is said to have had eighteen bridges over it, of which seven were in the city[22]. When the 19th century local historian, Hassan Khuihami, penned his famous chronicle, '*Tareekh-i-Hassan*', five bridges had already perished while thirteen were in place[23]. Charles Bates also enumerates thirteen bridges over the river[24]. Hassan lists nineteen, present and perished, bridges built over the Jhelum in different periods from Khanabal to Kohala. His compatriot, Anand Koul, writing in 1925, adds one more to the number[25].

The 20th century Kashmir witnessed a spurt in construction. It was during this period, particularly the second half of the century, that bridge construction also received a fillip. In the first half of the century, a few bridges like the one at Sangam, were constructed. However, the post-1950 decades saw many bridges coming up over the Jhelum. The concrete bridges in Kashmir are a gift of this period. It needs to be borne in mind that the present bridges in Srinagar named after the Muslim rulers are not the original ones constructed by them. These have been repaired and rebuilt many times in subsequent years and, in many cases, some distance from the original sites.

From the point of its formation near Khanabal to the Line of Control, there are at present thirty-nine wooden and concrete bridges spanning the Jhelum. Some of these are at different stages of construction, after having been set ablaze in the recent years, while few are closed for all or particular kind of traffic.

The ten o'clock gunfire

Customs and rules have been associated with bridges in Kashmir, some of which are still followed by people. The custom of *kadle taar*, money obtained from a bridegroom while crossing a bridge when the latter is returning to his home along with his bride after the marriage ceremony, is religiously observed till date. The driver, carrying the bride and the groom, even if he is a close relative, will stop the vehicle as the first bridge on the way approaches and will not budge an inch before the groom hands down some money to him.

Till a century ago, people were not allowed to cross bridges in the city during the night. As the night approached, people would stay indoors and not try to break the restriction on crossing the bridges after 10 PM when a gunfire would announce the beginning of the restriction. "The ten O'clock gun is the curfew, and all good citizens are supposed to be in bed, and no one is allowed to cross the bridges in the city after gunfire"[26].

During the Dogra rule in Kashmir, Government regulated traffic on bridges through promulgamation of rules. In September 1918, Pratap Singh issued an order for regulating traffic on Amira Kadal[27]. According to the rules, no vehicle would cross or pass any other vehicle, any body of troops or police exceeding 40 in number marching in column of four, any body of cavalry or police sawars exceeding 12 in number nor laden or un-laden pack ponies exceeding 12 in number.

No body of troops or police on foot or mounted would pass on to the bridge while any vehicle was on the bridge proceeding from the opposite direction. A constable was posted on either side of the bridge to hold up vehicles or troops etc. until the bridge was cleared for their passage. Each constable was provided with a red flag to hold up as a sign that the bridge was closed for vehicles etc. to proceed. Failure to obey such order would render the offender, on conviction, liable to imprisonment not exceeding one month or fine upto Rs. 200 or both.

The constables were provided with whistles to signal each other that a vehicle was approaching the bridge. The end of the bridge from which the whistle would be first blown would have the prior right of way. A constable was also posted in the middle of the bridge to regulate traffic, prevent loitering or crowding on the bridge and to warn persons to keep out of the way. All motors and other vehicles were ordered to be driven with strict regard to safety and convenience of the public. Bodies of cavalry and police sawars would cross the bridge at a walk.

A bridge is known as *kadal* in Kashmiri. Thus we know the bridges in the Valley as Safa Kadal, Zaina Kadal, Sangam

Kadal or Sumbal Kadal, named after individuals or places of their location.

The Khanabal Kadal, 50 kilometers from Srinagar in south Kashmir, is the first bridge over the Jhelum in its journey downstream. The name of the original builder is not known. However, Pratap Singh had constructed a new bridge here in 1894[28]. The existing Khanabal Bridge was built by the then Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in 1982. It has a span of 94.20 meters. The next in the line is the Padshahi Bagh Bridge at Bijbihara inaugurated by the Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah on August 10, 1998, 3 kilometers downstream from Khanabal. The 102 meter long four span bridge, costing Rs. 3.06 crores, has replaced the old wooden bridge gutted in early 1990s. It is the first cable stayed steel girder bridge in the State.

The Bijbihara Bridge was originally built by Prince Dara Shikoh, son of Emperor Aurangzeb, in AD 1631[29]. Dara's bridge connected the two flanks of his Chinar Garden separated by the Jhelum. During the time of the Sikh governor, Karnail Mian Singh (AD 1834-36), the bridge was swept away by a flood. Charles Bates confirms the existence of the bridge in AD 1872 when he visited the area. Downstream from here, the next bridge, a concrete one, over the river is at Sangam. Adjacent to the Sangam Bridge is the old, now dilapidated and not used, conventional cantilever deodar bridge of the same name. The bridge was originally built by Pratap Singh in AD 1910[30] and is the first to be constructed over the Jhelum in the 20th century.

The Khanabal, the Bijbihara and the Sangam are the three bridges spanning the Jhelum in the district of Anantnag. The river then enters the district of Pulwama where the fourth bridge over it is the Padgampore Bridge, originally built by Haider Shah (AD 1472-73). The bridge was destroyed in a fire during the Chak rule[31]. Later, Pratap Singh built a bridge here in 1921[32].

The present Padgampore bridge is a wooden one and in bad shape. Hassan refers to it as Awantipore Bridge, perhaps because of a nearby village of this name. Between the bridges of Bijbihara and Padgampore, he mentions another bridge existing some time in the olden days which was destroyed in a fire as a result of clashes between the warring Chak factions. After Padgampore is the Kakapore Bridge, constructed at a cost of Rs. 3.6 crores. The concrete bridge, with a span of 183 meters, was thrown open on December 5, 1996.

Another bridge, the last in the Pulwama district, at Pampore was torched during militancy which began in 1989 and, as official statement put it, saw complete or partial destruction of 398 small and large bridges across the Valley in eight years[33]. The new Kadalbal Bridge at Pampore was inaugurated by Farooq Abdullah on July 24, 2000, about 37 months after its foundation was laid on June 28, 1997. The 121 meter long bridge was completed at a cost of Rs. 5.76.

The original Pampore Bridge was constructed by Shah Jahan in AD 1635[34].

A bridge at Pandchhokh, downstream from Pampore in the outskirts of Srinagar, had been built by Habba Khatoon, the poetess queen of Sultan Yusuf Shah Chak. Koul gives the year of construction as AD 1588[35] and Hassan as AD 1520[36]. Both seem to have erred. While Kashmir had two years prior to AD 1588 passed into the hands of the Moghals, Habba Khatoon became the queen of Yusuf Shah when the latter was on the throne of Kashmir which he ascended first, in AD 1578 and then in AD 1579. The bridge was later swept away by floods and never rebuilt.

City of Twelve Bridges

Srinagar, once the City of Seven Bridges, today has a total of twelve bridges over the Jhelum of which some were partially or completely damaged in the recent years and have been reconstructed on modern lines. As the river enters Srinagar, the first bridge spanning it within the city is at Athwajan leading to Srinagar bye-pass. It is of concrete and was built by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in early 1980s.

A distance of about 5 kilometers downstream from here is located the Zero Bridge at Sonawar. Despite its location upstream from the Amira Kadal, it could not rob the latter of the dubious distinction of being the First Bridge in the city and was thus christened as Zero Bridge. It is a typical Kashmirian deodar type, constructed in 1957 by the then Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. Because of its dilapidated condition, the bridge was closed for all types of traffic in 1998 and is now used by pedestrians only.

In the close proximity of the Zero Bridge is the recently constructed Abdullah Bridge, named after Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. The pre-stressed concrete bridge, officially inaugurated on December 5, 1994, months after traffic had already begun plying on it, is the longest over the Jhelum within the Valley. It has a span of 240 meters. The three lane bridge has also a fly-over and a viaduct about it and the total length of the bridge, the fly-over and the viaduct is 377.50 meters. The expenditure on its construction was to the tune of Rs. 8.46 crores. The foundations of the bridge are of RCC wells sunk in the river bed to the designed level. The superstructure consists of six pre-stressed concrete girders for each span and the piers are of reinforced cement structure. The bridge has been designed for IRC Class 70-R loading, considered to be the heaviest loading taken into account for bridges.

One of the darker shades of the Abdullah Bridge is its close proximity with the bewitching Emporium Gardens. Running almost over its eastern entrance, the bridge has ruined the beauty of the garden which could have been saved if it was built at its originally proposed site, a little distance downstream near the General Post Office. The site, where the pier foundation work had also started, was, as was rumoured then, changed to save the business interests of an influential citizen.

A little distance from here, at Lal Mandi, work has begun for constuction of a foot-bridge.

About a kilometre and a half of the river length downstream from the Abdullah Bridge, in the middle of the river, are four semi-demolished piers of solid masonry. The piers are all that is left of the old Amira Kadal built by Pratap Singh[37] in AD 1895 after the earlier one was found insecure in the wake of the devastating flood of AD 1893. The flood had swept away all the other six bridges in the city. The bridge, after reconstruction, was thrown open for traffic on May 14, 1896[38]. Known as the First Bridge, as it was then the *numero uno* among the seven existing bridges in Srinagar, it was a modern structure of five arches whose piers were built of solid masonry.

The original Amira Kadal was constructed by the Afghan governor, Amir Khan Jawan Sher, in AD 1773[39]. According to Biscoe, "the bridge was at one time covered with houses and shops, not unlike old London bridge"[40]. The remnants of the old Amira Kadal bridge, built of stones in lime and brick-dust, are so strong that the contractor, assigned with the job to demolish the bridge after a new one was constructed here in 1979, left the job mid way as the host of labourers engaged for the demolition were not able to remove more than a stone or two a day. The job proved too expensive for the contractor to carry out. Before the demolition, when the bridge was closed for traffic, a cluster of unauthorised makeshift shops sprang upon it and the authorities had a tough time in removing the encroachments.

The present Amira Kadal is a pre-stressed concrete bridge. It was opened for traffic on October 20, 1979 by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. The peculiar thing about its construction is that it is built in an arch shape, rising from its two ends towards the centre, and, contrary to all other bridges, is obliquely constructed which led to a lot of criticism about its design. For quite some time it remained the subject of an interesting debate among the public who attributed motives to its oblique construction, similar to those attached to the shifting of the Abdullah Bridge from its originally proposed site. I was then on the staff of the local Urdu newspaper, Aftab, and had recently launched a four-line front-page column in verse, a poetic cartoon of sorts, on day to day developments. On the day of the inauguration of the bridge, the quatrain, echoing the public sentiment, read thus:

Mubarak ab yeh rasm-e-iftita ho
Badi mushkil se yeh rasta dikhaya
Hidayat hai ki seedhi raah chalye
Magar yeh kya ki pul tedha banaya ?

(May the inauguration [of the bridge] be auspicious. It is after a long wait that it is being thrown open. How come the bridge has been obliquely built when you have been sermonising us to walk on the straight path)?

The footpaths of the bridge present the scene of a busy market place as fisherwomen and vendors make good business there.

At a stone's throw from the Amira Kadal, lies the Badshah Bridge named after the 15th century ruler of Kashmir, Zain-ul-Aabideen, popularly known as Badshah (Great King). The wooden bridge, connecting the Maulana Azad Road with the one leading to the Civil Secretariat, was constructed by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad in 1957. The Government announced in 1997 a plan to construct a new six-lane Badshah Bridge. However, the plan to construct the bridge and a fly-over here ran into rough weather for "environmental considerations" resulting in the suspension of the work. While the the fly-over has been abandoned, the constuction of the bridge has started.

Downstream from the Badshah Bridge, the Jhelum enters the old city of Srinagar where the next bridge over the river is the newly constructed Habba Kadal few meters upstream of the old wooden bridge of the same name. The bridge, which cost Rs. 6 crore was thrown open for traffic on January 14, 2001 by Farooq Abullah. It is the first prestressed bridge over the Jhelum to have been constructed by a local contractor.

The Habba Kadal was originally built in AD 1551 by Habib Shah, the then ruler of Kashmir[41]. Contrary to common belief, it has no connection with Habba Khatoon. The bridge was repaired in different times and during the reign of Pratap Singh it was demolished and reconstructed[42]. In 1951, it was again repaired and its foot-paths widened. A wooden fencing was also erected on the bridge. In the post-1931 political situation, following the killing of 22 unarmed civilians by the army, the bridge served as a platform for the freedom movement launched by Kashmiris to end the Dogra rule. The *Mahasetu* (a boat-bridge) built by Harsh Dev is believed to have been situated somewhere here opposite his palace. Habba Kadal was the first of the six successive bridges swept away by the flood of 1893.

Fateh Kadal - bitter memories

The next bridge over the Jhelum is the Fateh Kadal built by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in 1982, few meters upstream from the old bridge of the same name. It is a concrete construction and was named as Biscoe Bridge after Tyndale Biscoe, an educationist of repute. The name, however, did not find public acceptance and the bridge is now known by the old name. The Fateh Kadal was originally constructed in AD 1499 by Fateh Shah[43] who ruled Kashmir in three stints between AD 1489 and 1516. During Pratap Singh's rule, the bridge was demolished and reconstructed at its original place. It was subsequently reconstructed by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in 1951[44] when its span was 74.6 meters with a carriage way of 4.7 meters.

The Kashmiris have very bitter memories associated with the Fateh Kadal which has gone into history as a scene of utmost cruelty and barbaric expression of state authority. In the Sikh as well as in the Dogra rule, Kashmiri Muslims were subjected to untold repression. During these times, the Fateh Kadal presented a ghastly picture. There was a pole and a hook on the bridge upon which used to swing the bodies of those convicted of cow-slaughter[45]. This inhuman act was performed to warn other citizens about the consequences of disobeying the authority. Biscoe, writing a century ago, says that the convicts were often boiled in oil and then hung from the hook fixed on to a pole in a public place. He recalls an old colonel telling him that when the latter was in Kashmir as a subaltern, he remembered seeing a boiled corpse hung as food for the birds of prey[46]. The man had been convicted of killing a cow.

The Fateh Kadal had shops on it in the olden days. Biscoe's book, 'Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade' (Reprint 1971), has a picture of the old bridge showing a shopline on it. The caption of the photograph reads that the shops have "now been cleared away"[47]. There is indeed something wrong either with the printing of the photograph or its identification by the author. The shrine of Shah-e-Hamdan in the background of the bridge should have been on the right side of the photograph as it is actually situated a small distance downstream from the bridge. The negative seems to have been printed on the reverse side which is why it shows the right bank of the river on the left side of the positive print. Or it could be that the photograph in question is actually of Zaina Kadal, the next bridge over the Jhelum from where the shrine, if photographed, will appear on the left side of the picture. After all, the Zaina Kadal is also believed to have had shops on it[48].

The Fateh Kadal was the second bridge to be washed away by AD 1893 floods.

A small distance downstream from the Fateh Kadal, work is in progress on the construction of a new Zaina Kadal. The concrete bridge will have a span of 88 meters and a carriage way of 14 meters. On completion, it will relieve the present Zaina Kadal of increasing traffic load. The old Zaina Kadal, situated some meters downstream from the upcoming bridge, is named after Zain-ul-Aabideen who originally constructed a bridge here in AD 1427 and named it after himself[49]. The bridge was the second over the Jhelum after his brother had built the first one, a little distance downstream, nine years earlier.

Zain-ul-Aabideen was very fond of the bridge. It is said that when his son, Adam Khan, revolted against him, the King was advised by his army chief to order demolition of the Zaina Kadal in order to prevent the rebel troops from crossing the Jhelum and take on the royal forces. Zain-ul-Aabideen was initially reluctant but had to ultimately bow before the military strategy. Jonraja, the court historian of Zain-ul-Aabideen who describes the bridge as having four towers made of stone and wood, recalls how apprehensive the King was about his foes taking advantage of the bridge and the possible commotion in the city in the wake of the revolt by Adam Khan[50]. However, he does not mention dismantling of the bridge.

A feud between the sons of the two Chief Ministers of Fateh Shah saw the Zaina Kadal being burnt down. One of the two ministers had spent a lot of money on it. The bridge was burnt in the night together with the houses in the neighbourhood in order to over-power the enemy. The town and the bridge presented the appearance of a forest that was burnt[51].

Due to the dilapidated condition of the Zaina Kadal and its strategic importance, as it led to the main city trade centre, Maharaj Ganj, Pratap Singh demolished it for reconstruction which finally got completed in the time of his successor, Hari

Singh[52] (1924-47). During the Prime Ministership of Bakshi Gulam Mohammad (1953-63), the bridge was repaired. In the earlier part of the Dogra rule, the bridge served as a hanging place for people.[53] The existing Zaina Kadal is 91.4 meters long and 10.3 meter wide. The bridge is of historical importance and has also enriched the local language (see Through the Literature).

Spiritual incident

A spiritual incident involving one of the great saints of Kashmir, Sheikh Hamzah Makhdoom popularly known as Makhdoom Sahab, is also related with the bridge. The 16th century legendary saint crossed the bridge with Khawaja Khizr who, according to Muslim belief is a noble being and will live up to the doomsday. Khizr, the belief goes on, meets every believer at least once in life time but only the pious can recognise him. Some interpreters of the Holy Quran say he is a faithful servant of Allah.

The anecdote of Khawaja Khizr's meeting with Makhdoom Sahab is related by Baba Dawood Khaki[54], an illustrious disciple of the saint. Khaki writes that one day during summer when Makhdoom Sahab had gone to Jama Masjid (Grand Mosque of Srinagar in the neighbourhood of the Zaina Kadal) to offer Friday prayers, an old man with white beard and a radiant face, wearing a green shawl, met him after the prayers and shook hands with him. "With the touch of his hand the heat caused by the summer sun vanished and filled the atmosphere with an air of freshness and happiness",[55] told Makhdoom Sahab to Baba Dawood, adding that he did not want to leave the hand of the pious being.

Together they walked hand in hand and crossed the Zaina Kadal to go, through Lakhriyar Bridge, to Khanda Bhavan where the two sat under a willow on the bank of the river and Khawaja Khizr imparted spiritual training to Sheikh Hamzah.

The Zaina Kadal, once known as the Fourth Bridge was the third in succession to be swept away by the flood in AD 1893. Aurel Stein assumes that the *Brhatsetu* or the Great bridge of Praversen II was situated in the vicinity of the Zaina Kadal[56].

The first permanent bridge

At a downward distance of less than half a kilometre from the Zaina Kadal is situated the Aali Kadal, a steel bridge constructed in 1996 after the old wooden bridge was set ablaze during the night intervening September 25 and 26, 1991. The bridge has a narrow carriage way enough only to allow pedestrians and two-wheelers. The Aali Kadal was originally built by Ali Shah, brother of Zain-ul-Aabideen, in AD 1419[57]. Ali Shah ruled Kashmir between AD 1416-22.

The significance of the Aali Kadal lies in the fact of its being the first permanent bridge over the Jhelum. Prior to it, the two banks of the river were connected by detachable boat-bridges. Besides being a historical event of great significance, the construction of the bridge was a major engineering feat. With this, the engineers of the Muslim rule took a march over their predecessors of the Hindu era and permanently tamed the Jhelum. The bridge had been repaired during different periods. During Pratap Singh's time it was dismantled and reconstructed at its original place[58]. In 1964, the bridge was again dismantled and reconstructed with a span of 72.5 meters and a width of 6.7 meters[59].

Not too far away from the Fifth Bridge of Srinagar, as the Aali Kadal used to be known earlier, is the pre-stressed concrete Nawa Kadal, or Nov Kadal. The bridge, torched in 1984 in the wake of the dismissal of the then Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah, was rebuilt at a cost of Rs. 2.83 crores and was thrown open for traffic on April 30, 1998. It has a span of 70 meters. The piers of the gutted wooden bridge have not been removed and from a distance it looks as if, the concrete bridge is raised on wooden piers. Originally, the Nawa Kadal was constructed in AD 1666 by Noor-ud-Din Khan, a Mughal governor of Kashmir[60]. The Aali Kadal and the Nawa Kadal were, respectively, the fourth and the fifth of the total six Srinagar bridges washed away by the flood in 1893. The sixth being the Safa Kadal, situated a little distance downstream from the Nawa Kadal.

The new Safa Kadal is the latest construction built in pre-stressed concrete at a cost of Rs. 5.50 crores. The bridge, thrown open on December 7, 1997, by Farooq Abdullah has a span of 92 meters with a 14 meter carriage way. It is built at the site of the old wooden Safa Kadal that was burnt down during the intervening night of July 29 and 30, 1990. The bridge had been constructed in 1960 by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. It had a span of 112.7 meters and a width of 8.5 meters[61].

Originally built by the Mughal governor of Kashmir, Saif-ud-Din Khan,[62] in AD 1671, the Safa Kadal was reconstructed by Pratap Singh and repaired by Hari Singh[63] before it was dismantled for reconstruction in 1960. For three centuries, the Safa Kadal enjoyed the distinction of being the last bridge over the Jhelum in the city and the only one for the next 32 kilometers. The honour, however, later went to the Seemath Kadal or Cement Bridge situated a short distance downstream from the Safa Kadal.

Send-off to wooden bridges

In the olden days, it was across the Safa Kadal that travellers from Srinagar to Central Asia would set on their long and arduous journey. Kashmir then had trade relations with Central Asia. The area of the present Idgah in Safa Kadal was an important *padao* or halting point for the traders coming from or going to the Central Asian cities. During the Mughal and the Afghan rule, big trade fairs were held here in the vicinity of the Yarqand Sarai where Tibetan, Turkish and Yarqandi traders would buy and sell goods[64]. These traders were known as *hajis* as most of them had performed the Haj pilgrimage. The interaction with these people had a positive effect on the local population in as much as they could speak the languages of these traders until recently.

The Seemath Kadal constructed in 1964 by the then Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, got its name from the material (*seemath* or cement) of which it was built. Prior to this, the bridges in Kashmir were made of wood. If the Aali Kadal had the distinction of being the first bridge over the Jhelum, this one is no less significant, for with its construction the wooden bridges were given a send-off in Kashmir. The event though occurring late as compared to other places in the world, was in itself epoch making for the civil engineering in Kashmir. The Seemath Kadal was named as Noor Jahan Bridge in memory of the famous queen of Emperor Jahangir but the name somehow did not click with the masses.

Between Seemath Kadal in Srinagar and Sumbal Kadal in north Kashmir, a distance of 32 kilometers, there is no bridge over the Jhelum. By the time the river reaches Sumbal, it is already miles inside the Baramulla district. The Sumbal Bridge is of concrete and the second such construction to have been built over the Jhelum. It was thrown open on April 11, 1970. A little distance from the bridge is the old dilapidated deodar Sumbal Bridge, now closed for vehicular traffic. The bridge is used by the pedestrians and *tongas* (horse-carts) only.

There is no record in the vernacular history of the name of the original builder of the Sumbal Kadal. In the devastating flood of AD 1893, it was the only bridge after the Amira Kadal to have withstood the onslaught of the ferocious Jhelum. Local people had attributed the survival of the bridge to the efficacy of the flags of the saints which had been set up to arrest the floods[65].

A few kilometers downstream from here is the town of Hajan where an old wooden bridge was put to flames in early 1990s. In the olden days, the Hajan Bridge had been washed away and was not rebuilt till the last century. The name of the original builder is not known. As of today, Hajan is again without a bridge and the Government has announced its decision to construct a new bridge.

From here, the Jhelum flows down to enter the Wular only to later re-emerge at Sopore.

The wooden bridge over the Jhelum at Hathi Shah, Sopore, was burnt in the early1990s. The new bridge built of concrete and named as Sofi Akbar Bridge after a famous political figure of the area, Sofi Mohammad Akbar, was thrown open for traffic by Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, on August 21, 2000, two months after it was ready for inauguration. The bridge has a span of 140 meters with a 7.8 meter carriage way and cost Rs. 4.2 crore.

The Sopore Bridge had been originally constructed by Zain-ul-Aabideen in AD 1460[66]. The King had constucted a palace at Baramulla, materials of which he later shifted to

Sopore and built a large palace there. Jonaraja, giving an account of this, writes that the King also constructed a "swinging bridge" which looked like "the necklace of the goddess of fortune which presided over Kramarajya (Kamraz as north-Kashmir is known even today)"[67].

In AD 1492, the bridge was destroyed at the command of Fateh Shah when he was fighting the Chaks who were ultimately defeated[68]. Biscoe recalls the river in Sopore being spanned by a "drunken-looking" cantilever deodar bridge[69]. Another bridge over the river in the town is the timber-decked Chhankhan Kadal. The bridge is today unsafe for heavy vehicular traffic. A new 183. 60 meter long pre-stressed girder Chhankhan Bridge was inaugurated on July 13, 1998. The bridge was constructed at a cost of Rs 6.67 crores. From here to Azad Ganj, in Baramulla town, the river is without a bridge.

The Azad Ganj Bridge is an old cantilever deodar type on which only light traffic is allowed due to its weak condition. A concrete bridge in the heart of the town is today taking the whole brunt of the traffic crossing the river there. A wooden bridge near the bus stand is open for light vehicles only. In the bygone days, there had been a bridge over the Jhelum in the town of Baramulla whose builder's name is not known. It was some distance from the site where Atta Mohammad Khan, an Afghan governor of Kashmir (AD 1808-10), had constructed a bridge over the river[70]. The vernacular histories also mention a bridge over the Jhelum between Sopore and Baramulla named as Nowrozpore Kadal built by Sultan Haider Shah in AD 1479. The bridge was destroyed during a battle between Mukhtar-ud-Daula and Abdullah Khan, an Afghan governor in AD 1807[71].

Between the bridge at the Baramulla bus stand and the point where the Jhelum crosses the Line of Control, there are as many as thirteen bridges over the river at Gantmulla, Peerin, Chhan, Bunyar, Chandanwari, Mohura, Thandamandar, Dewaran, Parinpila, Shahadra, Decchhi, Kamalkote and Jullah. These are of different types including the suspension and bailey bridges.

Beyond the LoC, Pratap Singh had constructed two bridges at Domel and Kohala in AD 1888 and 1895, respectively[72]. The Domel Bridge was rebuilt in AD 1903. The

Kohala Bridge had been originally constructed in AD 1871, some distance below the AD 1895 site.

In Pakistan, the Jhelum has the longest bridge over it with a span of 810 meters[73]. The bridge is a part of the prestigious 333 kilometers long Pakistan Motorway between Islamabad and Lahore, inaugurated on November 26, 1997.

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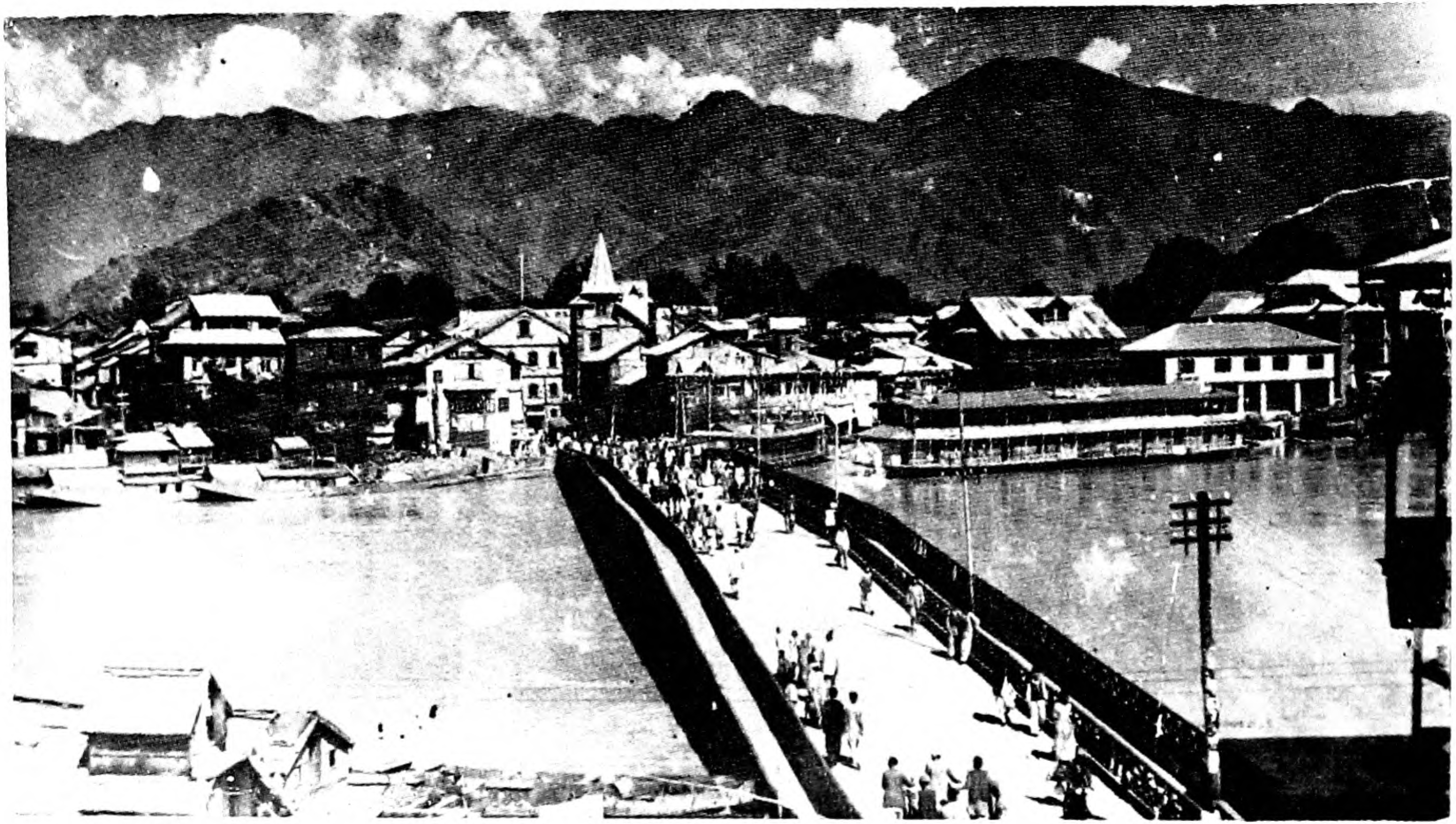
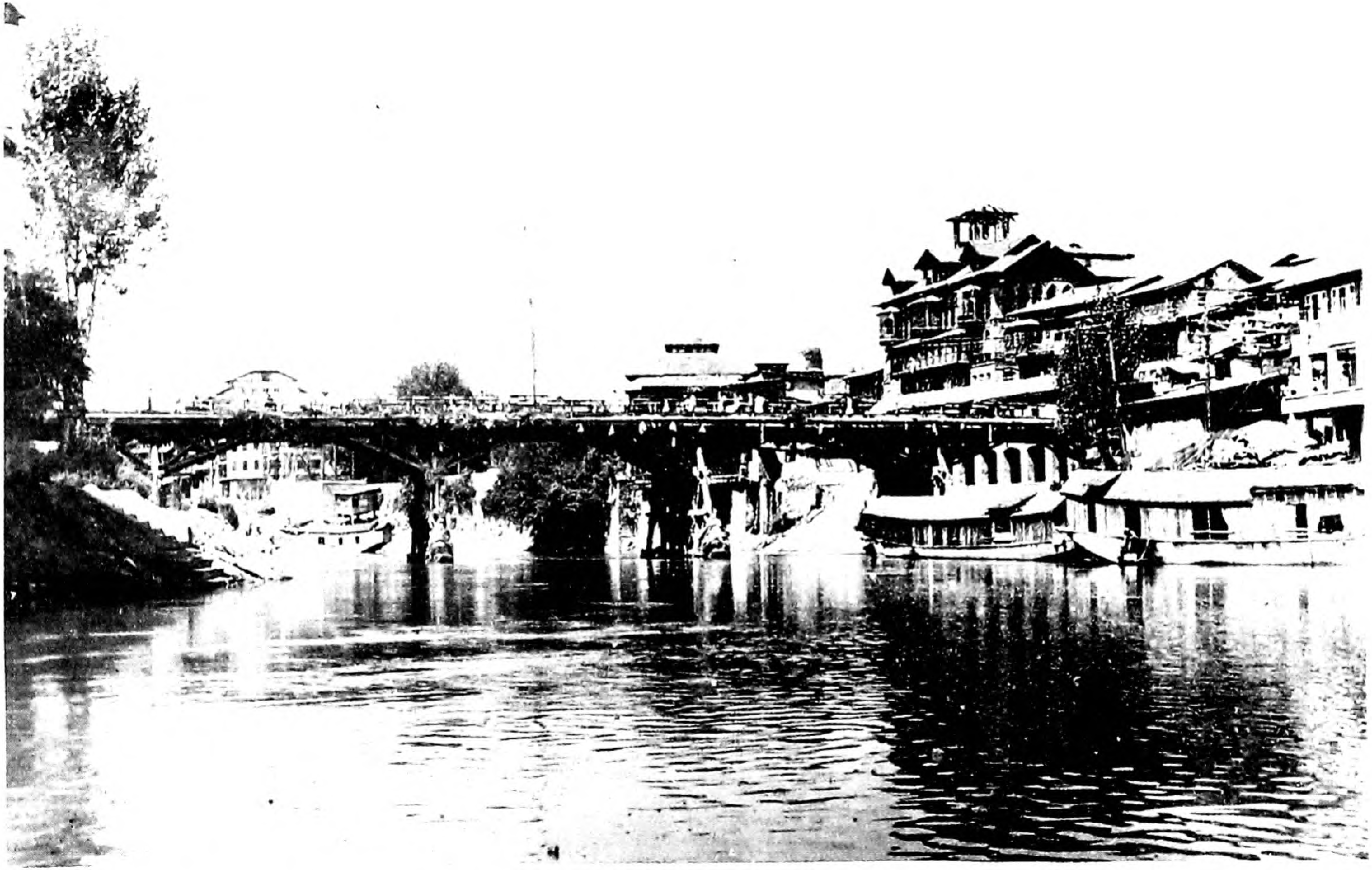


Summer time view of the Jhelum under the old Amira Kadal in the bygone days



The Zaina Kadal, one of the three wooden bridges over the Jhelum in Srinagar still open for traffic.

FLOODS AND FALLOUT

The Jhelum flows as an un-impressive watercourse and remains confined to its channel when rains are away. The river is navigable throughout the maximum part of its course in the Valley, stretching from Anantnag to Baramulla, and until the stream shrinks in winter, boats can be rowed without difficulty. During summer, when snows melt in the mountains and streams flow brimful down to the Jhelum, accompanied by incessant rains, the 'sleeping lion' suddenly wakes up and roars ferociously across the Valley.

Heavy rains alone would not cause flood nor would melting snows do that without the accompanying rains. The two work together in causing the Jhelum and its tributaries to increase their volume menacingly. Towards the close of the 19th century, Walter Lawrence observed: "Rain which lasts for twenty-four hours, if it is widespread, causes high water on the river Jhelum but not serious floods"[1]. In recent years, however, the situation has changed, thanks to the enormous siltation coming down from the catchment and shrinking of the channel of the Jhelum due to encroachments on the banks. Hence, continuous, heavy and widespread rainfall for little more than a day turns the Jhelum into a ferocious river.

The Jhelum drains the entire Valley of Kashmir as it flows through its length and all the streams, rivulets and *nallas* that flow in Kashmir ultimately merge with it. In plain terms, any drop of water anywhere in the Valley has to come down to the Jhelum, making the river basically the repository of all catchments. For the past fifty years, forests and vegetation have been vandalised resulting in soil erosion and since we have lots of rain in the mountains, it brings along top soil in great volume and deposits it in the Jhelum whose natural bed and dimension, like any other river, is defined.

The process, over the years, has raised the river bed and sedimented the water basins like the Wular. That explains heavy floods in the Jhelum with slight rains in summer. The otherwise calm Jhelum is a curse when in spate, dreaded by locals who live or have their agricultural lands along its course. In such times, the river overleaps its banks or a strong current breaches the embankment inundating vast areas and causing widespread damage to life and property. Crops in the low lying areas particularly bear most of the brunt. Since the fall of the Valley is slight, the losses caused by the floods in the Jhelum are always on the higher side below Srinagar where the agricultural fields remain submerged long enough for the rice crop to get damaged.

The oldest flood

The story of floods in the Jheium is as old as the river itself. Many disastrous floods have been recorded in vernacular histories, of which the oldest dates back to the reign of Raja Sundersen (BC 2082-2041) when the "Khadanyar mountain slipped, due to an earthquake, into the Ollar Nag",[2] stopping the passage of water and inundating the whole Valley up to Bijbihara in south Kashmir. This caused havoc to the property and agriculture. For a thousand years, half of the Kashmir Valley remained submerged.

Around this time when the Mauryan ruler, Narendra, had just ascended the throne, Kashmir received a strange guest, Sandhiman or Solomon by name, who came flying on his *takht* (throne) and descended on a hill top[3]. People were wonder struck to see the miracle of the man whom they regarded as an angel or *devta*, devine personality. They came flocking to see him. The King also paid his obeisance. The people requested the guest to deliver them from the distress the inundation had brought upon them.

The kind-hearted Solomon ordered his companions to deepen the river and remove the obstruction in it. No sooner did he give his orders than the *jinns* dredged the river and cleared the obstruction, paving way for drainage of water and restoring the Valley to the land form[4]. The description of Solomon as commanding *jinns* is identical to the attribute of Prophet Solomon as given in the Quran, the Holy Book of Muslims. After a week's stay when Sandhiman left Kashmir, Narendra accompanied him leaving behind his country and throne. Since then, Kashmir became to be known as *Bagh-e-Sulieman* or Solomon's Garden and the hill as *Takht-e-Sulieman*. Francios Bernier also refers to this incident as an ancient belief among the local people[5].

The first flood recorded in the Gregorian era is the one that submerged the city of Srinagar in the reign of Raja Durlab[6] (AD 627-63). During the reign of Laltadita (AD 725-53), floods destroyed the palace of the King along with most of the city buildings[7]. Consequently, the King shifted his capital to Letapore, 22 kilometers in the south. The flood of AD 879 was the greatest, following the slipping of, again, Khadanyar mountain below Baramulla. The channel of the river was blocked and a large part of the Valley was submerged[8].

The blockade of the channel, according to popular belief, was removed by the ingenuity of Suya, King Awantivarman's engineer, who threw large amount of coins into the water and encouraged poverty and hunger stricken people to bring these out along with the impeding rocks and rubble. In AD 917-18, when Raja Parth ruled Kashmir, the flood drowned the entire city and houses floated on water like bubbles[9]. During the reign of Sultan Shahab-ud-Din, 10,000 houses were destroyed due to a major flood in AD 1379[10].

During the time of Zain-ul-Aabideen, a severe flood hit the Valley and the Jhelum and its tributaries seemed to vie with one another and drowned the villages in their fury. Srivara writes that the waters became ungovernable and caused mischief, "lowering objects which were high and lifting up things that were low"[11]. The flood waters swept away beasts and living beings, as well as houses, grain and other things. In the city also, buildings were drowned in water. The King had built a flag-house made of stone and wood, consisting of four towers, on the Jhelum which served as a bridge to people who came to visit him. The floods destroyed the portion of the building on the side of the town and only the columns and two towers survived.

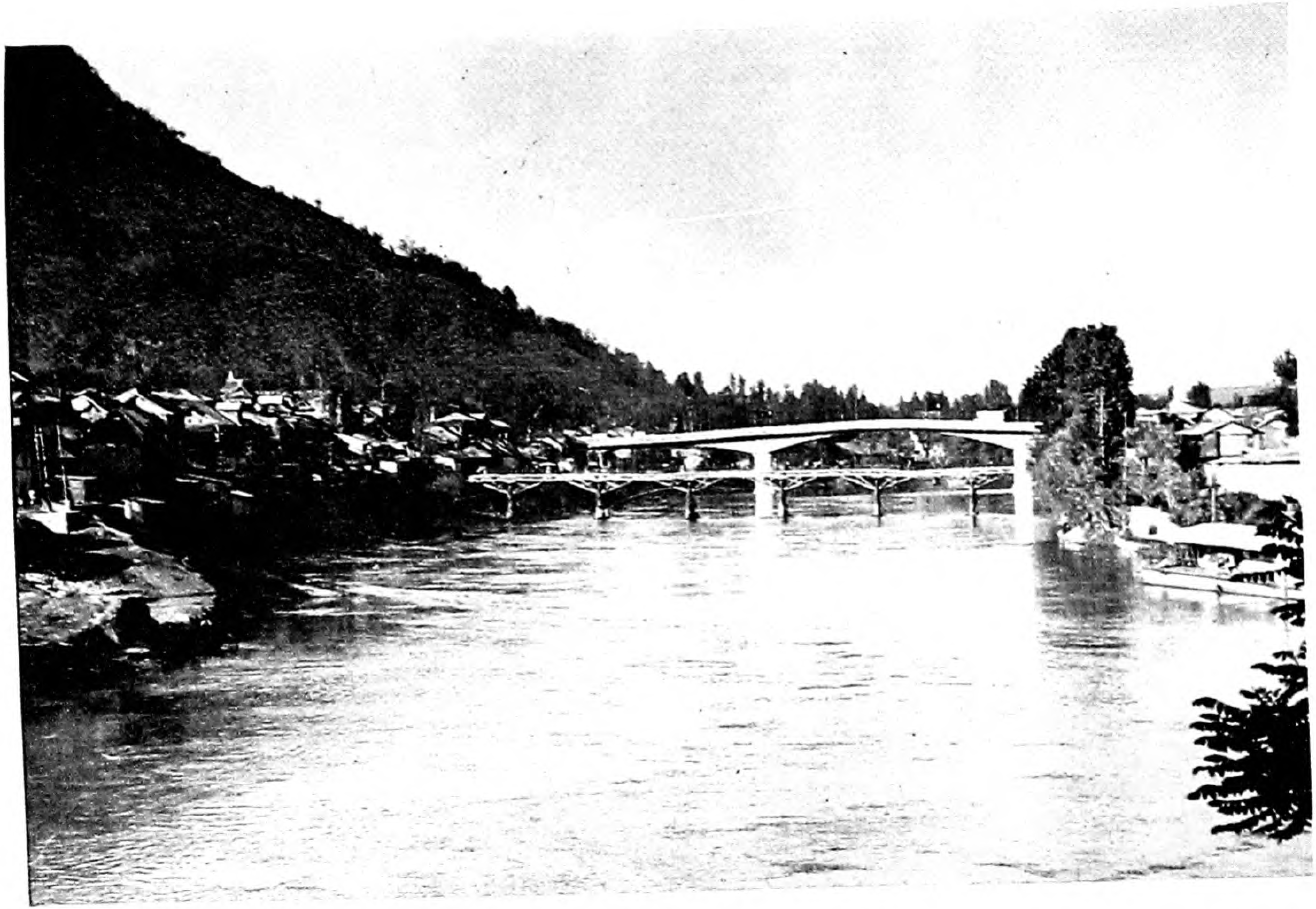
The Jhelum is said to have flowed in the opposite direction after its flow was blocked due to edifices of the town falling into the Wular. The Valley looked like a vast lake with landmarks submerged and roads destroyed. The King was filled with anxiety and driven by kindness towards his subjects, set out in a boat and saw the cultivated fields inundated. Mercifully, later that year Kashmir's bowl was full due to a flourishing crop. The King, however, apprehended recurrence of a similar calamity and built a town on an elevated site[12].

In AD 1747 as many as 10,000 houses are said to have been damaged and all the bridges over the Jhelum swept away by the floods[13]. During the governorship of Amir Khan Jawan Sher, in AD 1770, buildings collapsed and bridges over the Jhelum were damaged[14]. The bridges at Khanabal, Bijbihara, Pampore and Amira Kadal were again swept away in AD 1836-37 floods[15] while in the AD 1841 flood, all the bridges on the Jhelum from Fateh Kadal to Sumbal were washed away[16].

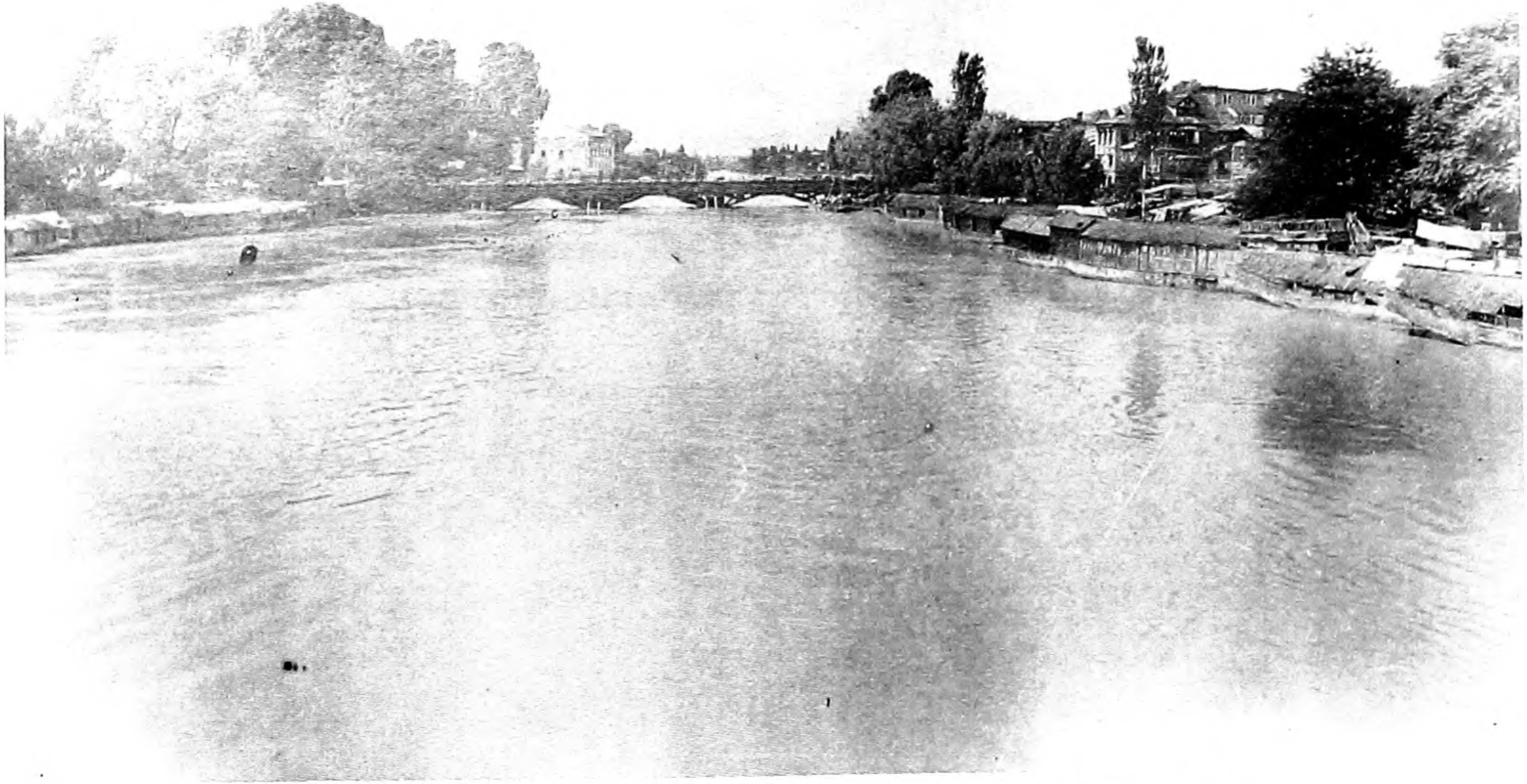
The flood also caused damage to life and property. Some marks shown by old men to Walter Lawrence, who was in Kashmir at the fall of the 19th century, suggest that the flood of AD 1841 rose nine feet higher on the Dal lake than it did in AD 1893, described by Lawrence as 'a great calamity'[17].

An annual feature

The floods in the Jhelum are an annual feature, with some leaving behind a trail of destruction like the flood of AD 1893, caused due to enormous rain which commenced on the morning of July 18 and, without break, continued for 52 hours[18]. The only meteorological station in Kashmir had recorded five inches of rain before it was destroyed by the floods. The rainfall was heavy and abnormal to the extent that a bear and a panther were found drowned side by side in Deosar in south Kashmir while at another place a huge python was carried down to the plains. The river began to rise menacingly on the morning of July 20. The level of water rose to 24.5 feet which, on the day of commencement of rain on July 18, was 13.5 feet only.



The Jhelum through the Baramulla town



The Jhelum in spate. Flood waters nearly touch the top of the Badshah Bridge.

On the following day, it touched the high of 26.9 feet, spilling over all protective bunds. On July 22, water began to recede and by July 30, it had reached the low of 13 feet. In the city of Srinagar itself, confusion was rampant as communication between the two sides of the Jhelum was terminated following the succumbing of the second bridge to the flood and, later, by the sweeping away of the other five bridges[19]. The sole exception standing the shock was the first bridge, Amira Kadal, though under water and impassable. In the city, seventeen people were killed, including six from drowning and one from the fall of a house, while in the rural areas thirty-two perished in the floods[20].

The flood cost the state Rs. 64804 in land revenue alone while 25426 acres of land under crop were submerged, 2225 houses wrecked and 329 cattle killed. Upstream Srinagar, the damage to crops was small due to the appreciable fall of the river from Anantnag to Srinagar. Around Srinagar, the damage was considerable while the greatest loss occurred below the city. The floods converted the south of Srinagar into a vast lake. No dry land, save the *Takht-e-Sulieman*, was in sight. "Ponies and cattle climbed into verandas, and many men spent the night of July 21 in trees"[21].

The boatmen took advantage of the situation and charged exorbitant price for taking people from trees and housetops, and in the city itself these "harpies" refused to ferry persons across the river unless they paid extravagant fees. The flood also broke through the gate protecting the Dal lake and submerged the lake gardens. Wailing and despair prevailed everywhere amid which tales were making rounds of the efficacy of the flags of saints set-up to arrest the flood.

The only good thing about the flood was that the maximum water level in the river was reached during day time. The situation would have been worse had it taken place in the night. The wheat, barley and the rapeseed left on thrashing floors were destroyed. Maize crop was completely submerged and large quantity of grain and fodder was lost. The immediate effect of the floods was that the price of the essential commodities went up considerably.

Floods of the 20th centuary

The 20th century also witnessed many severe floods in the Jhelum resulting in widespread damage to both life and property. The flood of 1903 was of grave dimension, breaking all previous records. The rainfall occurred on July 1 and continued unabated upto July 6 throughout the Valley and over the surrounding hills[22]. After a break of few days, it again started raining heavily on July 11 for a week. The second break lasted for four days and on July 21, heavy rains again lashed the Valley till July 23. The prolonged spells of widespread rains resulted in two floods taking place in the month of July alone.

The first lasted from July 11 to 17. It took nearly 72 hours to reach Srinagar from Khanabal. The flood caused many breaches in the left bank of the river. By the noon of July 22, the water in the Jhelum began gradually receding and as the people thought the danger for the year was over, the second flood came on July 24. The Jhelum was at its ferocious worst. The whole Valley became a vast expanse of water and "all distinctions of banks and lands were completely obliterated"[23]. As all the swamps were full, the flood waters took only 22 hours to reach Srinagar from Khanabal. The situation was very grim but was partially saved by bursting of the Dal gate, taking the flood water three to four days to fill up the lake which acted as a "safety valve and practically saved the city"[24].

Though the flood claimed no human life, the loss to crops was heavy and estimated about one-sixth of the total cropped area. Considerable damage was also done to the vegetable gardens on the Dal lake. In the afternoon of July 24, the area between Munshi Bagh and Amira Kadal to the foot of the Shankaracharaya hill in the uptown Srinagar, was submerged. The water on the road in this area was as high as 8.5 feet. As many as 83 villages suffered losses to standing crops, out of which 26 lost the whole kharif harvest[25]. The total houses destroyed were 421 and the cattle heads perished were 625. In the horticulture sector, a large number of young plants were destroyed. The prices of essentials rose exceedingly high. The city dwellers had to pay three to four times more than the normal rates for cereals[26].

The flood of 1903 was officially described as "the highest and the most disastrous in its consequences of which any record exists or which living memory can recall in the land which is exposed to perennial danger from floods"[27]. It was accordingly felt that full and complete record of it should be maintained. The then Divisional Engineer, Kashmir, Sirdar Ganda Singh collected all the details and prepared a "useful information"[28]. His work includes record of ordinary water levels in the Jhelum at Khanabal, Munshi Bagh, Shergarhi, Sopore and Bramulla gauge sites and the highest flood level during the two floods of 1903 at these sites.

The interesting feature of the second flood, as can be seen from his data, was that the Shergarhi gauge recorded the maximum flood level before the Munshi Bagh gauge. This can be attributed to the fact that the heading up caused by the bridges and city would generally be felt first close to the obstruction and it would not be till the heading at Shergarhi had reached a certain height that it would head back on the Munshi Bagh gauge. Similar reason was attributed to the flood level reaching higher at Baramulla before it did so at Sopore during the first flood. Singh opinesd: "The obstruction is at Baramulla and hence it is natural that the heading up should show first close to the obstruction"[29].

Next in the major floods are the ones which occurred in 1905, 1909, and 1912. Of the three, the first took place in May, an unlikely season for flood to occur in Kashmir. It was said then that no such spring flood had occurred in the last century. The exceptionally heavy rainfall in the middle of May quickly led the water level to rise in the Jhelum and after a couple of days it crossed its "greatest height"[30]. The low lying areas of north Kashmir remained submerged for the whole month, destroying the rabi crop. The year saw another flood in September following the incessant rains for four days causing the Jhelum to rise by 22 feet. In Srinagar city, the water in the river was a foot lower than the top of the embankment. The Flood Spill Channel, constructed two years before, helped a great deal to save the city by diverting excess water in the Jhelum. The damage caused was, accordingly, not substantial. However, crops suffered some damage. The Jhelum Valley Road was damaged and blocked by landslides. Some bridges were also washed away. All the six deaths reported in the September flood were due to drowning[31].

The flood of 1909 was disastrous for crops, considering the remissions proposed by the Government which amounted to Rs. 69,765. The total loss was estimated at Rs. 98,393[32]. The flood of 1912 occurred in the month of May when the Spill Channel again played a great role in minimising the extent of damage that otherwise would have been caused by a swollen Jhelum. Many bridges between Baramulla and Chakoti (across the LoC) were washed away. There is no authentic information available about the total loss caused by the flood except that twenty-one lives were lost[33].

The flood in the summer of 1950 was devastating in terms of damages it caused in the Valley. The right bank of the bulging river gave in above Batwara Custom Station around midnight preceding the annual Muslim festival of *Eid-ul-Azha*. The flood waters quickly engulfed the area downstream from Batwara and swept away whatever it could, including houses, shops, timber logs, petrol barrels, and within no time the whole area up to Sonawar was submerged. The water entered the ground floor of the houses that resisted the flood onslaught. Boats, rescuing people, were freely rowed through these houses.

The pressure of the current was so great that it breached the embankment of the nallah at Sonawar, uprooting and sweeping the huge *Khazir Khanen boen* (the Chinar of Khazir Khan, a vegetable seller whose shop was close to the tree), oil mill and a shopline. The menacing waters posed great threat to the civil lines of the city when it breached the right bank of the *Tsont kol* at Rustum Gari near Drugjan, an old city locality. Immediate protective measures, however, saved the situation but could not prevent the flood waters from entering the Dal lake resulting in considerable damage to the floating vegetable gardens on it.

My mother who has bitter memories of the flood that also damaged our ancestral house at Sonawar, told me that people ran for their lives leaving behind everything and the force of the flood water was so enormous that a stone mottar, weighing around two quintals, was carried away from the compound of a house to a distance of 300 meters.

Seven years later, in 1957, another major flood in the Jhelum took place. The water level in the river was alarming, higher than in the flood of 1950. The water overflowed the right bank of the river in uptown Srinagar though no damage was caused to the embankments. The low-lying areas below Srinagar were inundated and crops and property damaged. The water level in the Jhelum was said to have been the highest thus far. A red mark on the building wall of the Squash Courts at Sonawar measures it about a storey high. The widespread damage caused to the standing crops resulted in a famine whose bitter memories are still fresh in the minds of the people.

The other major floods in the Jhelum during the last four decades include those of September 1966, May 1969, August 1973, July 1975, August 1976, August 1985, May 1986, June 1987 and September 1988. The water level in the river during these floods varied from a low of 24.80 feet at Sangam and 18.40 feet at Munshi Bagh to a high of 31.75 feet and 22.00 feet, respectively at the two sites[34]. The Sangam and the Munshi Bagh are the two important gauge sites maintained by the Flood Control Department on the Jhelum to record the rising and the receding trend of the river during floods so as to forewarn the public and the concerned official agencies about an impeding flood. There is also a gauge site each at Asham and Ningli. The highest water level recorded at the latter site was 17.65 feet in 1987.

Recent floods

In recent years, two severe floods occurred in the Jhelum in September and July of 1992 and 1995, respectively. The damages to property, crops and life were great. The highest water discharge during 1992 was recorded as 65,500 cusecs at Sangam and 41,000 cusecs at Munshi Bagh, while in 1995 it was 60,000 cusecs and 45,500 cusecs, respectively[35]. The highest flood level recorded in the Jhelum also belongs to these floods. In 1992, the Sangam gauge recorded the highest level of 32.60 ft while at the Munshi Bagh in uptown Srinagar, the gauge level was 22.20 feet. In 1995, the water level at these gauge sites was recorded at 32.30 feet and 22.60 feet, respectively.

The flood of 1992 was unprecedented both in terms of the water level touching an all time high at Sangam and losses to life and property. The cumulative losses caused by the flood in the Jhelum, as well as in its tributaries and other mountain streams across the Valley, were enormous. As many as 899 villages were affected in Kashmir. In terms of the human losses, 103 persons were killed with the highest of 40 in the district of Baramulla[36]. The injured and the missing accounted for 24 and 8, respectively. The total number of the affected persons was 8,95,117 including 3,14,000 in the district of Anantnag and 74,235 in Srinagar district. The total number of fully and partially destroyed residential houses was 7,380 and 19,735, respectively with an estimated value of Rs. 119.84 crores. In addition, 15,761 cattle sheds valued at Rs. 12.74 crores were fully or partially destroyed. The calamity also took a heavy toll of livestock, then mostly in the highland pastures where the mountain torrents turned killer streams, killing 24,464 cattle, 9,605 sheep and goats and 12,600 poultry birds.

The damage to crops was also extensive. In all, crops over an area of 75,985 hectares were damaged whose value was estimated as Rs. 91.25 crores[37]. The Pulwama district suffered the most with over 75 per cent damages to the crops while in the districts of Budgam and Kupwara it was 70 per cent and in districts of Anantnag, Srinagar and Baramulla 62 per cent, 30 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively.

The damage to the roads, bridges and buildings was to the tune of Rs. 36.84 crores. The losses in the sector of Public Health Engineering, responsible for the supply of drinking water and maintenance of water supply schemes, were to the order of Rs. 12.71 crores. In the Irrigation and Flood Control sector, 495 irrigation and 422 flood control works, costing Rs. 62.39 crores, were damaged. The highest number of irrigation works damaged were 137 in the Baramulla district and the highest number of flood control works damaged were 291 in the Srinagar district.

Valley plunges into darkness

The entire Valley plunged into darkness as the power generation, transmission and distribution system came to a standstill on September 10, 1992. All the power projects, including the then largest one in the Valley, the Lower Jhelum

Hydel Project and the Udhampur-Pampore Transmission line were severely damaged and continued to be non-functional for over a month. The Lower Jhelum Hydel Project and the Mohra Power Station, on the river Jhelum, were out of generation due to slush and breach in feeding canals. The losses in the Power sector were estimated at Rs. 11.68 crores.

In view of the great calamity, the Government announced relief measures such as ex-gratia assistance of Rs. 20,000 to the next of kin of the bread-earning dead and Rs. 10,000 in case of the death of a non-bread earner. For a fully damaged house, the owner was paid Rs. 5000 while the compensation for a partially damaged house was paid at Rs. 1,000. Besides, free ration and subsidy on cost of seeds and fertilisers was also distributed among the affected population.

The July 1995 flood was no less a disaster and claimed 54 lives, including the highest number of 17 in the Baramulla district and the lowest of 1 in Budgam district while the Srinagar district recorded fifteen deaths[38]. The number of injured persons in the Valley was 20. While 2,454 residential houses, including 911 and 743 in the districts of Baramulla and Srinagar, respectively were fully damaged, the total number of persons affected by the flood in the districts of Srinagar and Anantnag alone, where damage to crops was 75 per cent or above, was 4,22,221 comprising 54,607 families.

By the end of the year 1995, the Government released an amount of Rs. 20 lakhs to six districts of Kashmir for meeting the expenditure on emergent relief and rescue measures undertaken during the flood[39]. As ex-gratia relief to the next of kin of those who lost their lives during the flood, an amount of Rs. 2.65 crores was also released at the rate of Rs. 20,000 in case of a bread earner's death and Rs. 10,000 in case of the death of a non-bread earner. In addition, Rs. 50,000 were sanctioned in each case from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. The injured too were paid relief money which was also extended to those who left their live stock in the floods. The Irrigation and Flood Control sector itself suffered a loss of Rs. 51.75 crores as a result of damage to various irrigation and flood control works.

The flood in June 1996 was different in the sense that even as the water level in the Jhelum did not touch the high of

1992 or 1995, the river refused to recede for about a week after the rains had stopped. This was somewhat unprecedented as the Jhelum usually begins to recede within 24 hours of the termination of rainfall. The flood level remained static for the period, causing heavy damages to the residential houses that were inundated. In the Srinagar city and its outskirts, about 10,000 houses were flooded for over a fortnight.

Another interesting feature of this flood was the prolonged inundation of the Boulevard on the bank of the Dal lake. Since the water level in the Jhelum remained constantly higher than in the Lake, the flood gates on the Dal could not be thrown open. On the other hand, the incessant rains and feeding nallas kept the lake rising and it overleapt its present boundaries, submerging the Boulevard and several city localities on its periphery. The prestigious road was about two feet below water, terminating communication to and from Nishat, Shalimar and other villages in the lap of Zaberwan hill. The boats rowed freely on the Boulevard and *shikarawallas* made a fast buck by ferrying people to and from their homes.

The danger level

The water level in the Jhelum at which alarm is sounded is 18 feet at Sangam and 17 feet at Munshi Bagh. The danger level at the two sites at which flood duty is declared is 21 feet and 18 feet, respectively[40]. In normal times, the average minimum water level in the Jhelum is 13.50 feet at Sangam and 11.50 feet at Munshi Bagh during summer and 7.30 feet and 2. 60 feet, respectively in winter[41]. With such a low water discharge during winter, the Jhelum looks like a small stream unlikely to be causing the widespread damages it does in summer when it is in spate.

For some years now, gradual decline in water discharge is being observed in the river. However, due to a prolonged dry spell in the Valley, the all time lowest water level in the Jhelum was recorded on February 12, 2001 at 6.06 feet at Sangam and 0.40 feet at Munshi Bagh. Earlier, the river touched the lowest water level in the summer of 1999. On June 7, that year, the level at Munshibagh guage site was recorded at mere 0.90 feet while at Sangam it was 7.10 feet. The level was even lower than recorded in winter months when there are no rains and the snowmelt is months away to arrive from the mountains. This was an unprecedented situation to be witnessed in summer when Kashmir's streams race down brimful to merge with the Jhelum. Prior to this, the lowest water level during winter was recorded at 1.50 feet at Munshibagh on December 29, 1998. In 1999, the water discharge in the river was drastically reduced and in Srinagar city the decline was as much as 70 per cent. The river looked like a narrow stream so much so that at Pandrethan children were seen crossing it in knee deep water in the month of July.

The frozen Jhelum

The river in winter is likened to a sleeping lion. The fall in temperature to freezing level further tames it and during intense winters the Jhelum is known to have frozen also as it did in AD 1658, 1759, 1764, 1780, 1816, 1835, 1879, and 1895. In AD 1657, people and horses are said to have freely walked over the river. Likewise, in AD 1759, when the winter got prolonged, the Jhelum remained frozen till as late as March 31[42]. The freezing of the river, however, has not been reported in the 20th century though winters as intense as leading to the freezing of the Dal lake in 1963-64 and 1986-87 have been experienced by people in Kashmir who freely picnicked on the frozen lake.

The flood prone areas in the Valley with respect to the Jhelum are low-lying habitations and rice fields along the course of the river, like Anantnag town and surroundings, villages from Sangam to Lasjan including Awantipore, Kakapore, Padgampore, Kalipore, Malangpore, Pohu, Kadalbal and Kandzal. In Srinagar proper, Mehjoor Nagar, a low-lying habitation which was completely submerged in 1995 and 1996, Bemina and Parimpore are vulnerable areas. In Baramulla district, the Sonawari block and some places in Sopore are flood prone.

Various Government agencies are put together to meet the challenge during a flood and several committees like the Central Flood Committee and Zonal Flood Committees are formed to provide relief to the flood sufferers. While the engineering departments take care of immediate repair and strengthening of the river embankments, the Revenue department arranges relief measures like provision of boats, essentials and financial assistance.

Flood prevention measures

Water management has always been a problem and a real tough task to cope with by the rulers in Kashmir. The ninth century ruler, Awantivarman, is believed to have done a yeoman's service in this sphere by constructing embankments along the course of the Jhelum. To his credit also goes the first dredging in the river when his engineer, Suya, poured money into the flooded Jhelum and persuaded people to fish out the coins on the condition of bringing out the silt and rocks that had blocked the passage of the river in Baramulla.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Government took some protective measures in the aftermath of the devastating floods of AD 1893, including raising of the left bund of the Jhelum and the construction of two locks for navigational purposes at the upper and the lower ends of the *Tsunt kol*[43].

However, during the floods of 1903, these measures proved of no avail. Accordingly, the first major flood prevention measure was undertaken that year with the construction of the Flood Spill Channel at Padshahi Bagh, upstream of Srinagar city, to divert a part of flood discharge from the river and save the city from constant danger of floods. The Channel proved worthwhile immediately after its construction was completed in 1905 when major floods hit the Valley twice that year. On September 13, the Channel diverted a considerable volume of flood water and saved the city from an imminent inundation.

After the flood of 1909, the engineer in the Maharaja's Government suggested the replacement of the six wooden bridges in the city, below the Amira Kadal, by suspension bridges as the former "blocked the river flow during the floods"[44]. The job, estimated to cost Rs.1,83,400 and entrusted to a firm from Rawalpindi, however, could not be undertaken for unknown reasons. Another important flood prevention measure of this period is the dredging in the river undertaken in 1905-06 which proved very useful. In the year 1911, an amount of Rs 12,000 was earmarked for dredging works when the Dredging Works Division was seperated from the Jhelum Power Division[45].

Following the 1903 floods, the State Engineer in Pratap Singh's Government, Mr. Field, observed that under normal conditions, it takes 72 hours for a flood to reach Srinagar from Khanabal, a river run of 47 miles (75.6 kilometers), with a surface fall of 30.13 feet or a slope of 0.64 feet per mile (1.609344 kilometers) [46]. The difference in the level of water between Munshi Bagh and the Safa Kadal is 8.72 feet in a distance of 4.5 miles or 7.24 kilometers through the city. The difference of water surface between the Safa Kadal and the Wular is about 14.13 feet with a distance of 30 miles (48.28 kilometers) or a surface slope of 0.47 feet per mile.

Field made two specific recommendations. The first was to increase the outlet for flood waters through the Baramulla gauge either by lowering the bed or by providing additional waterway at the sides. The second recommendation was to discontinue the pernicious system of banking up the river within a comparatively narrow channel and to carry the Flood Spill Channel through all the swamps so that flood water can pass along several channels instead of being forced into one.

As floods occurred frequently, the attention shifted towards the protection of the whole Valley rather than the city of Srinagar alone. The devastation caused by the 1950 flood underscored the need for taking effective and extensive flood control measures. Various experts were associated with the task. These include M/s Harris, Purves, Tulsi Dass and Dr. H. L. Uppal[47]. In fact, all the major activities in the sector relate to the post '50 flood.

The Master Plan of 1959, at an estimated cost of Rs. 21 crores in collaboration with the Central Water and Power Commission, is one of these works. The major part of the work was confined to the improvement of the outfall channel of the Jhelum. Since the Plan could not mitigate the flood hazards in and upstream Srinagar, the Government constituted a six member committee in 1975 to evaluate, among other things, the work physically done on the Master Plan and the benefits accrued therefrom, examine and re-apprise the proposals and suggest improvements and modifications[48].

The Committee thought the safety of Srinagar as of prime importance. It recommended collection of regular, reliable and scientific data and suggested automatic gauging stations, cable ways with necessary equipment for taking cross sections, velocities and sediment load observations particularly during floods, establishment of a suitable organisation for conducting regular observations of cross sections and study of the behaviour of the river, Flood Spill Channel and major tributaries and provision of permanent reference points of long and cross sections through bench marks and R. D. Stones all along the river and the Flood Spill Channel.

The significant works executed during 1950-60 were the raising and strengthening of embankments, both upstream and downstream from Srinagar, in the reaches more susceptible to breaches and overflow, extension and improvement of Flood Spill Channel to restore it to its original capacity of 17,000 cusses, construction of marginal bunds around *numbals* and lakes en route and construction, reconditioning and repairs of various sluices and drainage channels flowing into the river[49].

With the implementation of the Master Plan in 1960, the works executed in the flood control sector include improvements to outfall channel from Wular to Khadanyar from a discharge of 17,000/19,000 cusecs to 40,000/45,000 cusecs, deepening and widening of the Khadanyar gorge for two miles up to the maximum depth of 8 feet and construction of side channel for bye-passing 12,000 cusecs, stabilisation of hill torrents falling into the outfall channel between Baramulla and Khadanyar gorge, diversion of Doodganga nallah for a partial discharge of 3700 cusecs and spot treatment works on the tributaries of the Jhelum.

The expenditure on the flood control works during 1950-60 was Rs. 1.2 crores, and from 1960 to 1975, when the six member committee was constituted to review the works done in the sector, it was Rs. 15.68 crores[50]. The flood control works done between 1950-75 resulted in reducing the number of breaches that used to occur and to, that extent, helped in the protection of the cultivable land; the improvements to the Flood Spill Channel provided increased protection to the Srinagar city while the construction of sluices and drainage gates reduced the period of submergence of the cultivable land.

The work done on the outfall channel lowered the highest flood level of Wular Lake, affording better protection to cultivable area of about 48,000 acres around the lake and improved the drainability of the Valley below Srinagar[51]. Another significant work was the dredging of the Jhelum in Baramulla which has of late been stopped, mainly for lack of finance.

Flood-fight not flood prevention

If there was an appropriate instance of digging a well during a fire, it is found in Kashmir where flood-fight, rather than flood-prevention seems the strategy to meet the challenge of a furious Jhelum or its swollen tributaries. The stress is more on damage-repair than on damage-prevention. When there are no rains or when there is a continued dry spell like the Valley has been experiencing for the last few years, perhaps nobody would be reminded of a Flood Control Department in Kashmir[52]. No major flood prevention activity has been undertaken for the last four decades. The embakements of the Jhelum are less than properly looked after with the result that encroachments on these get multiplied by the day, particularly within the city where sheds have been constructed by boat people. The mice feeding on grain, stored in these sheds, make rat holes in the embakements posing theat to the nearby population during floods. The concrete bund raised along the right bank of the river from Sonawar to Amira Kadal in 1952 has developed many cracks and has also caved in at several places.

Even as the flood control measures leave much to be desired, the paucity of funds faced by the concerned department is not appreciated by all. Other sectors suffering losses due to floods get quick and substantial money for restoration work. If sufficient funds were made available to the department, the losses suffered by other sectors could be averted or minimised[53]. To quote an example of meagre allocation for the Flood Control

Department, only Rs. 7.2 lakhs were provided against the losses of Rs. 8 crore during the 1995 flood in the Srinagar cicle of the department[54].

The 'Improvement of the River Jhelum Project' initiated in 1976 has resulted in incurring an expenditure of Rs. 3.10 crores on improvement works within the Srinagar city and Rs. 5.50 crores from Chhatabal to Banyari. Another project at hand, envisaging improvement of the Jhelum from Khanabal to Padshahi Bagh, is estimated at Rs. 30 crore.

Expert opinion

As immediate flood prevention measures, the experts agree to the design flood discharge of 90,000 cusecs at Sangam as adopted in the Master Plan[55]. They also suggest banning of plantation on embankments and waterways of the river and removal of encroachments. As regards measures to be taken from Sangam to Srinagar, these include raising and strengthening of embankments with a top width of 12 to 15 feet and a free board of 5 feet. The design capacities in various reaches are suggested as 90,000 cusecs from Sangam to Dongripora, Tokna, 60,000 cusecs from Tokna to Kandzal, 50,000 cusecs from Kandzal to Padshahi Bagh, i.e. the take-off of the Flood Spill Channel, 17,000 cusecs in Flood Spill Channel and 33,000 cusecs in the city channel. From Srinagar to Wular the design capacity was suggested at 33,000 cusecs from Srinagar to Shadipora and 42,000 cusecs from Shadipora to Wular.

In view of the economic non-feasibility of the diversion of the Pohru to Wular, the experts recommend the continuation of dredging at the Pohru mouth until an economic, efficient and permanent solution to the problem of siltation into the lake is found. The dredging work below Baramulla bridge up to Sheeri also needs to be resumed for the full design discharge of 45,000 cusecs.

One of the suggestions offered by experts to tackle the recurring problem of floods in the Jhelum is the construction of a second spill channel from Dongripore in Pulwama district to the Wular lake. The silting of the low lying areas on the left bank of the Jhelum above Srinagar is considered to be a precursor to such a channel. Though the Government has announced its decision to construct the second spill channel along the proposed alignment, geologists express doubts about its feasibility. They argue that the proposed channel fails "all the tests of a viable proposal including creativity, art and aesthetics"[56].

The proposal is termed as offering nothing except limited and short term flood control and fraught with serious socio-economic and, importantly, environmental problems. The land acquisition, population displacement and rehabilitation and further shrinking of agricultural land are the problems to follow the execution of the proposal. The channel is likely to be vulnerable to silting along its bed, like the Jhelum and the present spill channel, given its topographically imposed low gradient. Moreover, "the assured devastating spin-off of the proposed channel is the expeditious death of the Wular lake"[57]. A frightening proposition indeed!

The siltation of the Wular, caused by the Jhelum and the Ningli, has already played havoc with the 'Largest Fresh Water Lake of Asia' and adding one more potentially equal contributor of silt would only mean to hasten its death. Alongside recognising the need for a second spill channel to fight floods, the experts propose a "long term cost-effective and environment friendly" alternative in the form of the Pir Panjal Canal (PPC) involving the shifting of the Government proposed spill channel alignment from within the flood plain to the highest contour of the *Karewas* on the western side of the Valley[58].

The 'Benign Jhelum', as the PPC is referred to, would provide superior flood control mechanism with several spin-offs, like potential to provide irrigation facilities to *Karewas*, potable water for kandi population, increase in hydroelectric power and, most importantly, reduction in the silting of the Wular as the Canal would, along its course, receive the major silt contributing tributaries of the Jhelum and , instead of going into the lake, would join the Jhelum at Uri. Thus all the silt brought to the Jhelum by these tributaries and, subsequently by the river to the Wular, would be carried forward by the Canal to the Jhelum at the point where the Valley ends.

One does not, however, know how the Jhelum would look without its left bank tributaries within the Valley. Notwithstanding this doubt, the proposal needs to be debated particularly in the light of the dangers it identifies in the execution of the Government plan to construct the Dongripore-Wular Spill Channel.

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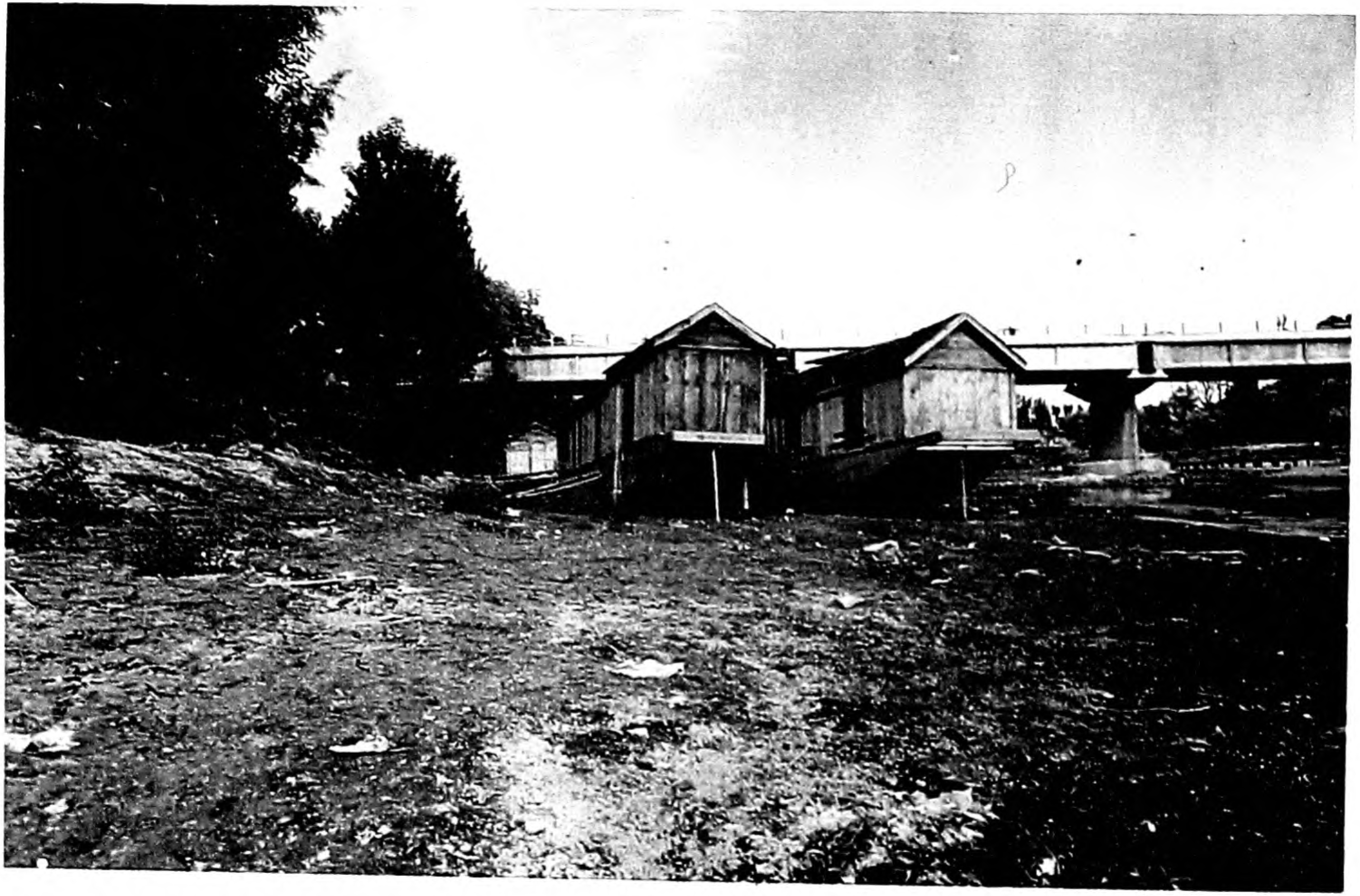

House-boats run aground? A view of the risen bed of the river near the Abdullah Bridge

A ferry boat in the river.

PERIL OF POLLUTION

As a cultural symbol of Kashmir, the Jhelum is as healthy as ever but as a river it is fast losing its individuality. Its water that once looked to the beholder as clear as crystal is today repugnant to the eye. It is difficult for an octogenarian to convince his children that the Jhelum once flowed brimful with clean water. Should the pace of pollution in the river go unarrested, the environmentalists worried about the deteriorating status of the Dal, will have to spare some tears for the Jhelum too. Perhaps the situation is best summed up in the warning : "From a river, Jhelum is fast turning into a sewer and once you have a sewer, you have lost the river"[1].

The source of pollution in the river is sewage and effluents that have considerably spoiled the quality of its water. The problem assumes greater dimension due to dense human settlements along the banks where the river is used as a 'dumping ground' for municipal garbage. Open drains carrying concentrated sewage and human excreta directly flow into it. The Jhelum, as we have seen, flows, besides the capital city of Srinagar, through three major cities of Kashmir - Anantnag, Sopore and Baramulla. It is through these stretches that the river receives maximum of its pollutants.

In Ananatnag town, there are three major drains with their out falls into the river, besides the minor ones originating from innumerable households in its close proximity that directly flow into it. With no organised solid waste management system available in the town, the waste is normally disposed into the river. The town generates 57 cubic meters of solid waste per day, out of which 18 cubic meters are collected by the Town Area Committee and dumped near Idgah or into the river[2].

Within Srinagar city, where there is no proper sewerage system, the drains carry the sewage, through contributory nallahs, into the Jhelum. Of the total 525-575 cubic meters of solid waste generated in the city daily, 70 per cent is causing public health nuisance and "finally reaches the river"[3]. Likewise, in Sopore, open drains carry household refuse and other effluents to nallas which empty themselves into the Jhelum. The town generates 35-40 cubic meters of solid waste per day of which about 85 per cent goes into the river[4]. The Baramulla town is no different story. Here also, the solid waste generally disposed under the bridges finds way into the river. Other towns like Bijbihara and Pampore, sitting on the river banks, too contribute to the pollution of the river in a big way.

Increase in chemical contents

The Jhelum, as a matter of fact, is dying both physically and biologically. Whereas the physical deterioration is in terms of shrinking of its channel and rising of the bed, the biological decay is reflected in the increase in chemical contents and the consequent deterioration of water quality. Most of the parameters exceed the permissible level. Nitrogen, phosphorus and calcium have increased to the level where the water is now unfit for human consumption. Alarming increase in ortho-phosphate, iron, total phosphorus and depletion in dissolved oxygen content has been recorded in the river water throughout its stretch in the Valley.

The ortho-phosphate level recorded at Anantnag, Srinagar, Sopore and Baramulla is 263, 451, 334 and 303 micrograms per litre, respectively[5] which normally should be in traces only. Similarly, the quantity of iron is 427, 456, 489 and 583 micrograms per litre, respectively against the permissible level of 300 micrograms per litre. The level of total phosphorus is about 700 per cent higher at Srinagar against the permissible level of 200 micrograms per litre[6]. At Anantnag, Sopore and Baramulla, the level is, respectively, 300 percent, 400 percent and 350 per cent higher than the normal. The level of dissolved oxygen depicts anoxic condition detrimental to fish population. The biochemical oxygen demand level of over 22 miligram per litre at all the four places has made the water of the river unfit for potable purposes which is now good for irrigation of hardy crops.

The insensitivity of the people and the local bodies towards the health of the river is glaring. Working separately, both contribute to the illness of the life-line of Kashmir. The dumping of hazardous wastes into the Jhelum generated by the two major city hospitals, Lal Ded Hospital and the Children Hospital situated on the right bank of the river in Srinagar, is being overlooked. The issue was recently raised in a newspaper story quoting experts that "if proper waste-management techniques are not applied soon, it may breed worst ever environmental disaster in Kashmir"[7]. It is pertinent that excluding the SMHS Hospital and the Institute of Medical Sciences, Soura , no other hospital in the Valley has incinerators installed for disposal of bio-medical wastes.

The State Pollution Control Board, now woken up to the danger, has issued notices to major hospitals directing them to install incinerators and sewerage plants. The water of the river, once consumed by almost the entire population living along its course, today breeds diseases. On the basis of the present pollution status of the river, experts feel that almost all the gasteroenteritic wards of the hospitals in Srinagar are thriving on the Jhelum's water chemistry[8]. Not to speak of the government run hospitals, even the government de-watering stations carry filth and pollutants into the river.

In Srinagar alone, the Urban Environment Engineering Department runs 52 de-watering units, of which 35 flow directly, and the rest indirectly, into the Jhelum[9]. The pumps run for five hours daily in normal times and in wet seasons for 20 hours and each unit adds 3000 cubic feet of sewage to the river every second. Dead cattle are also routinely sent into it. Boat people, living on the river, throw all domestic refuse directly into it. As if all this was not enough, excessive use of the pesticides, insecticides, weedicides and chemical fertilizers by farmers in rural areas along the river course have further changed the water chemistry of the river for the worse.

In fact, there is nothing unwanted that does not go into the Jhelum. Even the unwanted babies find their way into it. During the present turmoil in Kashmir, unspecified number of bodies were fished out of the Jhelum since 1990. The disgusting situation was aptly described by an eleder citizen thus, "Earlier the bridges in Srinagar would get mad crowds to see eagles gnawing at a floating carcass and now there are bawling mobs netting out the human bodies"[10].

Foul smell

The water in the Jhelum throughout the city, from Zero Bridge to Chhatabal, is dirty and smells foul. This stretch, once a favourite tourist attraction, is today a nauseating scene. During a boat ride downstream from Zero Bridge to Safa Kadal on September 12, 1998, I was shocked to see the river having turned into a festering drain. From the murky colour of its water to all kinds of pollutants floating down, the Jhelum looked like a moving cesspool. Polythene bags, plastic containers, glass bottles, pieces of used and worn out clothes - everything that should not have been there was floating on the surface of the river. At Fateh Kadal, the whole breadth of the river was covered with a thick blanket of synthetic carpet-waste material that had been thrown into it by some nearby carpet-weaving unit. At Alikadal, two carcasses of dogs were drifting down the river.

The banks along the entire course are dotted with heaps of garbage and dirty open drains flowing into the river. The increased siltation coming from the catchment also adds to the defacing of the river. At several places dry spots have emerged in the middle of the stream. Near the Abdullah Bridge, a big patch of earth had come up in the middle of the river where during low water discharge children even played games.

The turbidity level in the water has increased as a consequence of erosion in the catchment. The river is the repository of the entire catchment of the Valley. As much as 80 per cent of the State's area is affected by the problem of soil erosion,[11] a process aggravated by the development of hill roads, highways, urbanisation, quarrying and similar other developmental activities. The agricultural land accounts for higher rate of erosion and the Jhelum and its tributaries flow through such areas resulting in the increase in silt deposition into the river. During high floods, the particulate matter levels of the river increase appreciably. The investigations also show changed trends in biological population reflected by predominance of eutrophic species coupled with decrease in biological diversity. A significant variation of nutrient loads has been noticed between the up and down streams within the city. Similar situation was also recorded in Pampore town.

Threat to aquatic life

Having ruled out its water for human consumption, experts are now worried about the aquatic life in the river particularly the fish. The decreasing population of the local fish, *Shizothorax*, is a cause for much concern. The specie being as sensitive as the natives, can not stand unclean waters. Since the water quality in the river has deteriorated over the years, the *Shizothorax* finds it difficult to live in the depleted oxygen in the water. The fish in the river are infected with many diseases. The *Grossicheilus diplochilus* was found to be infected with black spots while fin rot was found in *Cyprinus carpio* and *Shizothorax curvifrons*[12]. As regards the magnitude of the infection, 80 per cent of the fish catch at Gantmulla Barrage were found infected[13].

The encroachment at different stages, water diversion to agricultural land and drying up of main stream belts have also taken the toll of the breeding pockets of fish in the river. Silting in the Jhelum is another threat to the fish life. The aquatic biota especially plankton, which forms the main food for fish, gets killed due to siltation. The consequent slow metabolic process greatly retards the growth, subjecting the fish fauna to disease and choking of gills. The deposition of the organic matter in the bed of the river also produces poisonous gases like hydrogen sulphide, ammonia and carbon dioxide which are detrimental to the aquatic life.

Banks encroached upon

The mushrooming of makeshift houses along the banks of the Jhelum have also added to the woes of the river. In the city stretch, almost all boat people have erected one or two structures each which have not only deprived the riverine of that magnificent look that it would have otherwise worn but also added to the filth and other pollutants going into the river. The Bund from Sonawar to Amira Kadal, that once presented an eye-catching view with moored house-boats and flower pots along the banks, today presents the view of a slum having developed on the face of the Jhelum.

During the Dogra rule, construction within the 25 meters on the river bank was banned throughout the city. The then State Council passed a resolution on April 2, 1901 providing that permission to be sought from the Srinagar Muncipality for construction of a new house or a house afresh on either side of the bank within the stipulated width would not be granted without the prior permission of the Durbar[14]. The object was that in future when opportunity occurred, a 25 feet wide street would be cleared throughout the town of Srinagar.

The restriction on construction within the specific limits, however, did not work and the then Home Minister expressed doubts about the object being gained as "almost every application for permission to build a house is recommended by the Muncipality"[15]. Of the 76 applications received by it, only one was rejected on grounds of poor hygiene. On this basis, the resolution was ultimately revoked by the Maharaja who felt that, "building on the riverside will add to the beauty of the town"[16]. Thus, a nice idea was laid to rest.

The subsequent decades saw the situation becoming worse as houses and commercial buildings sprang up on the protective bund of the river. Even religious places were constructed there. The result was not difficult for anybody to imagine. As the number of the households along the river banks shot up, the quantity of the domestic refuse and human excreta going into the river also increased many fold. Demolition of illegal structures by local bodies institutions on the river banks proves to be ineffective as the will behind the demolition is half-hearted. The encroachers lose no time in reconstructing their razed structures as soon as the 'demolition squad' is out of sight.

Human greed has brought people right on the Jhelum to construct palatial houses.

Conservation measures

The environmental awareness in Kashmir being dismal as is evident from the slow death of the Dal, there is precious little one can do to save the Jhelum from total degradation. The indifference towards the environmental issues here is phenomenal. Matters that attract the attention of entire nations elsewhere are simply not bothering anybody, from an intellectual to a commoner. The result is that we watch with a sense of indifference giant Chinars being felled in large numbers, precious forest cover depleting by the day and priceless water bodies facing extinction.

What is more shocking is the lack of knowledge in our 'emancipated' citizens about our environment. A leading local newspaper, editorially arguing for the conservation of Chinars in Kashmir, was ready to "sacrifice a hundred Dal lakes for a Chinar"[17]! While this gives an idea of how environment unconscious our people are, it renders the task all the more difficult for those who want and strive for the upkeep of our environmental heritage. It is in this background that nothing tangible has been done with regard to the conservation of our water bodies, the river being no exception. Experts have, however, in isolation suggested some measures to be taken to protect the Jhelum from further pollution on the one hand and restore it to its earlier glory, on the other. In the absence of any environmental movement in Kashmir, the onus of initiative lies on the government.

The State Government recently constituted the J&K Lakes and Waterways Development Authority which has prepared a Rs 284.42 crore project, under National River Conservation Plan, for the Jhelum[18]. The project envisages treating the sewage water at various places and several pollution abatement schemes for the four major towns along the banks of the river viz. Anantnag, Srinagar, Sopore and Baramulla. It also includes interception and diversion of the muncipal waste water, sewage treatment, low cost sanitation, solid waste management, bio and water quality monitoring studies, improvement of ghats, aforestation along the banks, community participation and institutional development and training. The project also addresses itself to the problems of siltation, bank erosion and agricultural run-off. A concept paper on Jhelum Basin Project involving Rs.18 crore, prepared through UNDP, has also been forwarded to Government of India. The project, planned for 20 years, is aimed at treatment of the Jhelum basin.

Jhelum Action Plan

Experts had recommended the initiation of a programme similar to the Ganga Action Plan to "cleanse the Jhelum and protect it from further deterioration"[19]. The Government of India have recently announced the Jhelum Action Plan precisely with the same purpose. The recommendations include taking care of the catchment areas by protecting natural forests, devising means to stop effluents to the river and, where these have to go into the Jhelum, ensure their treatment first and taking steps to improve physical and biological condition of the river.

The Hydrobiology Research Laboratory at S. P. College, Srinagar had prepared a project for conservation of River Jhelum[20] which was submitted to the University Grants Commission in 1993. However, the State Government sanctioned in 1997, a research project of the Eco Monitoring Laboratory (EML) of J&K Lakes and Waterways Development Authority where the studies are on for waste water, river water and fish[21].

The EML has taken up detailed investigation of the river with regard to catchment features, temporal and spatial variation in water chemistry, thermal changes, distribution and community structure of plankton, periphyton communities, fish catches, food and feeding of fish. It will also provide a set of uniform baseline data on the river ecosystem and monitoring of river water, provide an authoritative set of current data from which river management decisions could be made and provide data for setting the standards both for receiving water itself or for all water discharge into the river. The first technical report was released in May 1999.

In order to ensure conservation of the river, experts, besides calling for prohibition of pollutants from going into the river and setting of standards to achieve a given quality in the receiving water, recommend issuing of discharge licence to a polluter by the State Pollution Control Board and imposing of penalties for violating the agreed limits. Other recommendations include taxing the municipality and industries on the basis of various constituents in the effluents, diversion of various drains and sewers entering into the river directly, dredging of river basin and removal of the sediments, continuous and regular monitoring of the river water, removal of illegal occupants and demolition of latrines along the banks of the river and, above all, creation of general awareness about environment among the masses.

The measures, if taken in the right earnest, would go a long way in saving the river from further degradation. But, unfortunately, there is something wrong with our planning where "the Jhelum is not our priority when we are faced with the possible extinction of the Dal"[22].

If this is the line of action, one is afraid by the time we are over with the Lake, there might be hardly anything left to do about the river.

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ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE

The pre-historic people living in Kashmir of the mythological account when the Jhelum was not born, had asked for a watercourse and the Providence provided them with the means of livelihood as well, for the Jhelum not only provided water to the ancient natives but also contributed to the fertility of their land and material life. Kashmir without the Jhelum must have looked an unenviable place to live in. Be as it is the gift of the Heavens, the Jhelum over the centuries has remained very closely linked with the economy of the Valley. There are several economic areas linked with the river and it is difficult, indeed impossible, to imagine life in Kashmir without the Jhelum.

The oldest economic activity linked with the Jhelum is fishing and as the home of all indigenous fish fauna, the Jhelum is of great importance. The river provides natural environment to the aquatic biota which freely grows, propagates and establishes rights in it. The Jhelum is the home to various kinds of fish although the natives divide all types broadly into two categories of local (*Kaeshir*) and non-local (*Paerim*) fish, zoologically known as *Shizothorax* and *Carp* species, respectively.

The types of fish available in the Jhelum include *Schizothorax planifrons* (*Chosh*), *Shizothorax esocinus* (*Choru*), *Labeo diplostomus* (*Ropet*) and *Glyptothorax spp.* (*Anuir*). Besides, species of *Nemechilus* (*Aar gurun*) are also found in the river. Another fish *Mahaseer*, zoologically known as *Barbus tor* would arrive in the Jhelum, for breeding purposes, from Karachi in Pakistan. The migration of the fish to the upstream Jhelum has, however, stopped with the construction of the Mangla Dam on the river some time back. Walter Lawrence enumerates 11 principal fish caught in their seasons throughout the entire course of the Jhelum from Islamabad (Anantnag) to Baramulla[1].

There are about sixteen species of *Shizothorax* in Kashmir, of which about twelve are found in the Jhelum[2]. The upper reaches of the Valley are inhabited with an exotic Rainbow and Brown trout. The other indigenous fauna is *Shizothorax niger* (*Satter gad*), *Shizothorax progastus*, *Labeo diplostomus* and *Labeo deru*. Moreover, *Cyprinus carpio specularies* (Scale carp) and *Cyprinus carpio communis* (Mirror carp) are almost uniformly distributed, barring extreme upper and lower reaches.

Unusual fishing

The fishermen in Kashmir use nets and lines to catch fish. They sail in a boat, go deep into the lake or river and throw their nets or lines into the water where they know they might get a large catch. Amateur anglers or hobby seekers use rods. Apart from these commonly employed implements of fishing, some novel and interesting ways of catching fish have also been witnessed in Kashmir in the olden days. Abul Fazl mentions strange fishing technique employed by Kashmiris according to which boats full of stones and branches of trees were sunk in lakes and pulled up by ropes after a lapse of three or four months and many fish were caught that had homed there[3].

Similarly, Jahangir recounts an "unusual kind of fishing"[4] by Kashmiri fishermen. He writes about seeing this at a place where the water was up to a man's chest. Two boats were propelled side by side. The boats were in contact at one end and 14 or 15 yards (about 13 or 14 meters) apart at the other. Then two boatmen sat on the outside edge of each boat with long poles in their hands so as to regulate the space between the two boats. As the two men kept the edges of the boat apart, ten or twelve boatmen lowered themselves into the water and, laying hold of the ends of the two boats, joined together with their hands and trampled the bottom with their feet and moved on. The fish, caught between the boats, wanted to get out of the narrow space and came against the feet of the boatmen. Immediately, one of them dived and another pressed upon his back and kept him from coming up to the surface. The man below caught a fish and produced it. "Some who are skilful in the art catch two fish with their hands"[5]. Jahangir recalls an old boatman who generally at each dive brought up two fish. The kind of fishing was peculiar to the Jhelum.

Marion Doughty, a European traveller, also mentions a "primitive"[6] fashion of fishing by wading in the water a small net in the right hand. The fish, deceived by the stillness of the fisherman, would make for the entrance kept open by fine bamboos and then with swift movement of the left hand the unwary victim was hustled into the trap. Another kind of fishing, still prevalent, is employed in ponds and marshes by striking *naruts* (harpoon) into the water at the fish which pierces it and the fish is caught.

Fishing is a whole time profession and although the exact number of fishermen in the Valley is not available, it runs into thousands. It is impossible to say how many fishermen are engaged in fishing in the Jhelum alone as the registered fishermen can fish anywhere in the Valley. A fisherman may not confine his activity to the river alone. He may go to lakes and other water bodies also to try his luck. Whereas major lakes like the Wular and the Dal, which are themselves connected with the Jhelum, also offer great potential for fishing, the Jhelum has for centuries provided job to the local fishermen and they have depended for their sustenance on the prey of their nets and lines used in the Jhelum.

Annual catch

The month of March and early spring is considered most appropriate fishing season in the Jhelum. In the winter when the water level in the river is at its lowest, the fish go to the Wular.

The annual fish catch from the Jhelum is around 1500 quintals. In the year 1993-94, the total fish production from the Jhelum was 1565 quintals[7]. Of this, the *Carp* and the *Shizothorax* species accounted for 970 and 595 quintals, respectively. In the following year, as many as 1483 quintals of fish were netted from the river, including 938 and 545 quintals each of *Carp* and

Shizothorax species, respectively. The fall in the catch was due to the restricted movement of fishermen in the prevailing situation in the Valley apart from increasing pollution in the river. While Lawrence would consider 10 to 15 kgs a day as an average take for a successful fisherman a century ago, the largest single catch recorded is a 9.8 kilogram *Shizothorax esocinus* in 1982 from the Jhelum[8]. Tyndale Biscoe refers to a record 24.50 kilograms (54 lbs) catch of *Mahaseer* at Sopore[9]. The fish must have been a source of amusement for the locals who normally know of much smaller size of fish.

The right to fish is leased out annually to bonafide fishermen against the license fee of Rs. 80. Individuals can fish after obtaining a permit from the competent authority. The registered fishermen are provided some incentives by the Government like subsidised net, boat and nylon thread and a free insurance cover in case of an accident while carrying out fishing operation. By and large, the fishermen are at the mercy of middlemen who lend them a lumpsum advance money after deciding the rate of their catch for the whole year which comes merely to Rs. 5 to 10 a kilogram even though the retail price of fish goes as high as Rs. 150 a kilogram during winter when supply is low.

The advance money keeps the fisherman bound to sell his entire catch to the middleman who in turn gets a handsome return in the market. The fisherman, being a poor person, is only too willing to get himself bound by the contract that is squarely against his interest. The exploitation is rampant in the absence of a cooperative system where he could sell his catch independent of the middleman. Considering the low and high price of fish in different seasons of the year, if an average price is determined at Rs. 70 per kilo, the annual revenue from the Jhelum on account of sale of fish would come to over Rs. one crore.

River transport

Transportation of goods and people has long been associated with the Jhelum. In fact, until half a century ago the river was the only major mode of ferrying people from one place to another and cargo would be dispatched and received in barges rowed on the Jhelum. Before the present vehicular revolution in Kashmir, everything from essentials to fire-wood to building material was carried on the river in various kinds of boats from one destination to the other. Frederic Drew describes the Jhelum as "the great highway of Kashmir" as the river "is much used for navigation"[10]. The goods that came from India by the Banihal Road were taken from Khanabal to Srinagar in boats floating down with the stream at the rate of "a mile and a half or two miles an hour"[11].

Earlier, with the opening of the Jhelum Valley Road in 1891-92 along the course of the river, large increase in trade was recorded in Kashmir. The value of imports amounted to Rs. 66,16,145 and of the exports to Rs. 65,05,088. The total value of trade was greater than that of any preceding year, exceeding that of 1888-89, the earlier best, by Rs. 40,734[12]. An interesting thing related with the road is that the Maharaja's Government in AD 1895 issued a notification prohibiting plying of heavy carts on the road drawn by more than two bullocks[13]. This was to protect the road from speedy breaking.

However, in order to escape the law, the cartsmen resorted to use only two bullocks for the load that required three or more of them. This resulted in cruelty to animals which was subsequentely taken care of by another notification issued in AD 1898 allowing a load of only 15 maunds and banning use of emaciated or wounded bullocks. The Jhelum Valley Road was closed in 1947 following hostilities between India and Pakistan over Kashmir immediately after the Partition.

River transport in Kashmir is an ancient occupation, perhaps as ancient as one can think about. Navigation in the Jhelum is, in fact, referred to in the chronicles as an activity as early as a millennium before the dawn of the first century AD. Kalhana speaks about a town built by Nara who ruled Kashmir between 994 and 955 BC, on the "sandy banks of the Vitasta" near the present Bijbehara where "the coming and going of ships gave splendour to the river"[14]. Since the Jhelum is navigable from Khanabal to Baramulla, it provided an ideal route to take things from one destination to another.

People would also undertake river travel to go to places. For shorter distances, small boats known as *shikaras* were used while *doongas*, bigger boats, were used for longer distances. The river travel is now only restricted to recreation. The *doongas*, providing kitchen and lodging facilities also, were employed for taking parties on excursion, thus providing livelihood to the owners of the boats. A couple of decades before the houseboats were shifted to the Dal Lake, these were a permanent feature on the Jhelum and the summer tourists would find them an ideal place to stay in. Some *doongas* and house-boats are even now anchored in the Jhelum or its feeder canal, *Tsont kol*, where low and medium budget tourists still prefer to stay. A tourist may stay and eat in these boats or may choose to eat outside.

The shifting of house-boats to the Dal lake robbed the Jhelum *hanji* of much of his earnings. Nevertheless, the river has not lost all the tourist attraction. A *shikara* ride downstream the Jhelum in the old city is still favourite with the tourist, particularly foreign. Such a ride from the uptown Amira Kadal to the city heartland would earn a *shikara* owner anything between Rs. 500 to 600 plus a tip depending upon the kind and the purse of the tourist. I paid Rs. 500 for a *Shikara* ride downstream from Zero Bridge to Safa Kadal in September,1998. Besides recreation, a tourist would also make purchases from Kashmiri handicraft shops situated along the riverline in the interior city. Such shops are still present in areas like Fateh Kadal.

Watercrafts in the Jhelum

The Government is reviving the river transport in the Jhelum even as the vehicular congestion on the already strained roads of Srinagar and its fall out on the environment is causing great concern. A project named, Inland Water Transport (IWT), has been formulated envisaging motorised river transport system from Khanabal to Khadanyar. The first phase of the project covers the river length from Pandchhok to Chhatabal weir and is estimated to cost Rs. 9 crores[15]. In this phase, nine terminals serving as loading and unloading and embarking and disembarking points, would be constructed at Pandchhok, Batwara, Zero Bridge, Amira Kadal, Habba Kadal, Fateh Kadal, Nawa Kadal, Safa Kadal and Chhatabal.

A concept beautification plan has also been proposed to create better environmental conditions along the banks of the Jhelum for tourist attraction. The proposal includes repair of embankments, construction of pedestrian paths, landscape and other measures to improve the scenic beauty of the banks. The state Government had earlier engaged RITES, a Government of India enterprise, to study the possibilities of the revival of inland water transport system in Kashmir. The RITES presented its proposal in 1992, recommending motorised water transport system in the Jhelum and simultaneously proposing integration of the water way terminals with the road and the proposed rail systems so that the three systems supplement each other. The project recommends the heavy traffic movement areas in the northsouth and eastwest directions of the Srinagar city to be served by rail system with buses providing the feeder services and the areas on the two sides of the Jhelum by the IWT system. The buses will provide the necessary connections on all other routes.

The data relating to hydrographical, geotechnical and morphological features suggest that the stretch of the river from Zero Bridge to Chhatabal is feasible for passenger transportation subject to suitable modification to wooden bridges,[16] of which there are incidentally now only four left in the city, and improvement of waterway. Due to the short distance between terminals and sharp bends to be negotiated, conventional vessels with still water speed of about 8 knots are proposed to be used in the river with a seating capacity of 50 passengers and standing space for an equal number. The RITES report says that except at the occasional shoals and at the approach channel to terminals, there is no need of dredging in the river as there is sufficient natural depth available in this stretch of the Jhelum.

The passenger vessels will have a total height of 2.4 meters from the water level. The air draft available at various bridges during high floods, particularly the wooden bridges, is inadequate to allow the vessels to pass. The project recommends at least 3.5 meter air draft below the future bridges at the highest flood level to meet navigational requirement. As of today, some of the PRC bridges have less than 3.5 meter vertical clearance. The project also proposes removal of house-boats and doonga-boats, moored along the alignment, before starting the operation of water-crafts in the river.

The project, if implemented, will have two significant results, one of which is directly linked with the health of the Jhelum. In the first place, it will reduce the traffic load on the choking roads of Srinagar and, consequently, minimise environmental pollution. But, importantly, the project takes care of the pollution of the river in the city. The beautification of the embankments should also go a long way in restoring the riverline in the city to its earlier charm.

River and the PDS

The Jhelum has also been used by the State Government to reach the people in so far as the public distribution system is concerned. Until recently, the Food and Supplies department engaged *hanjis* for transportation and storage of essential supplies like rice, flour and sugar. The barges, locally known as *behatch*, were used for the purpose. A *hanji* was not the employee of the Government but was registered with the Food and Supplies department. He was responsible for transportation of the essentials from the launching ghat to the assigned ration ghat and also functioned as the watch and ward of the supplies issued to him for public distribution. He was engaged on commission basis.

Till as late as 1995, of the total 70 waterborne ration stores in the city, as many as 30 were located on the Jhelum in barges,[17] whose storage capacity was 100 to 200 quintals each. There were 118 *hanjis* registered with the Food and Supplies department in the Srinagar city. With a population of 7,50,000 rationees in the city, 30 per cent of these received their ration from the ghats on the Jhelum[18]. The practice of waterborne ration stores was very old in Kashmir but lately the Government dispensed with this system and brought these stores overground.

Until recently, the people of the city depended heavily on rations supplied by the Government on subsidised rates. Later, the subsidy was withdrawn in case of higher income group and marginally retained in favour of the lower income group. Since the Government provides non-local rice (*Panjaeb tomul*) which is not liked much by locals, they take it by compulsion rather than by choice. With the change in the economy of the people most of the city populace now procures choicest rations from the open market, though at higher rates than available at official ration stores.

The word 'ghat' is now linked with any ration store, whether situated on water or on the ground. Hence we have *tomul ghat* (rice store), *metchteel ghat* (kerosene store) and *tcheni ghat* (charcoal store).

Hydroelectricity

The Jhelum has a great economic viability in so far as its hydroelectric potential is concerned. The waters of the river have not been harnessed to the full potential and in fact only a fraction of it has been put to use so far. Hydropower potential of the Jhelum and its tributaries within the Valley is estimated to be approximately 2500 MWs. The hydroelectricity, apart from being environment friendly, is cheaper than other sources of power like atomic, thermal or gas. Accordingly, its significance in the economic development is tremendous. The Jhelum, as such, has much promise for the economic uplift of the Valley and if its waters were harnessed in full, it would bring about a revolution in the economy of the Valley.

The beginning in the generation of hydroelectric power was made about a century ago with the construction of the first powerhouse on the Jhelum at Mohura, upstream of Uri, in 1908[19]. The powerhouse, with a near-primitive wooden flume, had a modest installed capacity of 4 MWs[20]. Given the backwardness of the Valley then, it was a kind of a revolution in its own right. The electricity generated from the powerhouse served to light thousands of Kashmiri homes besides a small number of industrial units comprising huskers, flour and oil grinders, bandsaws, silk reeling and the like[21]. The installed capacity was raised to 9 MWs in 1962. Although it could not make any material change in the economy of the Valley except for generating small revenue for the state as electricity tariff, the Mohura heralded a new era of hydroelectricty generation in the Valley. The powerhouse was damaged on October 25, 1947 in the wake of Tribal attack. A recent flood in the Jhelum extensively damaged the powerhouse making it defunct. It was earlier in 1959 also struck by floods, breaking its building into two halves, longitudinally[22].

The first major hydroelectric powerhouse in Kashmir, however, came up in 1978, about two-thirds of a century after the Mohura, with the commissioning of the Lower Jhelum Hydel Project (LJHP), again on the Jhelum, at Uri. The project, with an installed capacity of 105 MWs, comprises three generation units of 35 MWs each. As the first major power project in the Valley, it gave birth to a climate of industrialisation in Kashmir besides facilitating electrification of most of the Valley areas.

However, with the increase in population and its dependence on electricity, the power generated by the LJHP, supplemented by other sources, also fell short of the actual demand. The two other mini-hydel projects on the Sindh stream, a major tributary of the Jhelum, at Ganderbal and Kangan, generating 15 MWs and 22.6 MWs, respectively and the 175 MWs Gas Turbine at Pampore also failed to improve the situation of power shortage. The industry in general and the public in particular suffer frequent and prolonged power cuts. With the onset of winter, the situation gets worse when daily load-shedding schedule is implemented, subjecting the Valley to as many as three days' evening and daily day-time power cuts .

Biggest powerhouse on Jhelum

The multi-crore Uri Hydroelectric Project, commissioned in 1997, is thus far the biggest powerhouse in Kashmir with an installed capacity of 480 MWs. The first of the four generating units of 120 MWs capacity each, was inaugurated in February 1997 by the then Prime Minister of India, H. D. Deve Gowda. The other three units became operational later in the same year. The project in the neighbourhood of the LJHP, was constructed in the Central sector by the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) in collaboration with a joint Swedish-British Consortium led by M/s Skansa of Sweden. The Rs. 3400 crore project is a run-of-the-river scheme with an underground powerhouse[23]. About 4000 persons, including 200 expatriates, worked on the project round the clock. As many as 2300 people were employed from the State itself.

Since the project is in the Central sector, it is not going to make any substantial improvement in the power situation in the Valley as the State will have to continue with buying electricity from the Northern Grid of which the Uri Hydel Project is one of the components. However, the portion of power imported by the Government from the Northern Grid for Kashmir is now available for purchase within the Valley which, if nothing else, will reduce transmission losses. The State Government has now taken up with the centre the transfer of the project to the state after Prime Minister Deve Gowda assured this to the state at the time of its inauguration. If that happens, it will usher Kashmir into a new era of economic development. The project has a provision for a complement of another four units of 480 MWs in stage II for which the survey has been conducted.

The revenue realisation on account of the electricity tariff in Kashmir runs into crores of rupees. The State earned a revenue of Rs. 1,15,63,42,419.34 in the Valley in eight years beginning 1987-88 by way of sale of electricity to both domestic and commercial consumers. While the highest[24] annual figure during the period is that of Rs. 21,86,33,897.28 in 1988-89, the lowest of Rs. 11,89,05,001.79 relates to the year 1990-91. The revenue collection in the Valley during the lean periods beginning with militancy in 1989 did not go below this figure. .

In the years 1993-94 and 1994-95, the revenue collections were approximately Rs. 26 crores including over Rs. 11 crores earned in terms of book adjustments with other consumers like State and Central Government offices. During the first five months of the financial year 1996-97 beginning April 1996, an amount of Rs. 99.65 lakhs was recovered as electricity tariff from consumers in Kashmir. Following the 'Amnesty Package' announced by the Government in 1997, the revenue realisation rose to Rs. 19.70 crores[25] by the end of February 1998. The package allowed 50 percent rebate in the electricity tariff payable between January 1990 and March 1997.The public, it may be recalled, had stopped paying electricity dues from 1990 in the wake of militants' directive.

The electricity tariff charged by the department varies from domestic to commercial consumers as also from metered to flat rates.

Lift irrigation

Another sector where the Jhelum plays an important role in shaping the economy of the Valley is irrigation. Since, the river flows below the level of the agricultural land along its course, the gravity system of irrigation was in vogue in earlier times and where the mountain streams allowed canal irrigation, it was taken recourse to. However, the river water flowed almost in waste so far as irrigating the land was concerned. But this changed after the lift irrigation system was introduced in Kashmir about three decades ago. The system opened new vistas for the agriculturist. Irrigation canals, fed with the water lifted from the Jhelum, were constructed across the Valley.

As of now, there are 47 lift irrigation stations in Kashmir on the Jhelum. Of these, the maximum number of 28 stations are in the Baramulla district followed by 13 in Pulwama, 5 in Srinagar and 1 in Anantnag. The total area irrigated by these stations both in *Rabi* and *Kharif*, runs into 33597 acres[26]. The largest lift irrigation station in terms of capacity to irrigate the agricultural land is the Marwal Lift Station in Pulwama district feeding an area of 8556 acres, followed by Letapore-I in the same district with a capacity of irrigating 2889 acres of land.

In the Baramulla district, the highest capacity station on the Jhelum is the Marakundal Lift Station which irrigates an area of 2333 acres of land. Lift stations at Shalteng, Shadipore and Janbazpore-I and II are the other three major irrigation stations in the district fed by the Jhelum with irrigating capacity of 1708, 1131 and 1117 acres of land, respectively. The largest lift irrigation station on the Jhelum in Srinagar district is Noorbagh Lift Station irrigating an area of 1277 acres. The total area irrigated by the lift stations on the Jhelum is 20,455 acres in Pulwama district followed by 11,347 acres in Baramulla, 1761 acres in Srinagar and 34 acres in Anantnag district. These are the four districts of Kashmir through which the Jhelum passes in its joouney within the Valley.

Sand extraction

Extraction of sand is yet another major economic activity related to the Jhelum. Although the sand is also available in other streams and nallahs like Sindh, Pohru, Ferozpur and Lidder, the bed of the Jhelum is a vast repository of this building material, yielding revenue to both State and the people engaged in the business of extraction and sale of sand. The river has many sand extraction pockets of which 10 are major ones. These include Sangam, Kakapore, Marwal, Pampore, Lasjan, Pandchhok, Batwara, Shadipore, Baramulla, Jatti and Khojbagh.

The Geology and Mining Department of Jammu and Kashmir Government, monitoring the sand extraction activity, has divided the Valley into three zones of Anantnag-Pulwama, Srinagar-Badgam and Baramulla-Kupwara. The annual extraction of sand from the Jhelum is said to be approximately 5700 cubic meters. The figure could be higher. The annual revenue accruing to the Government is about Rs. 1 lakh,[27] pointing to the nominal royalty charged by the Government at the rate of Rs. 4 per 100 cubic feet for allowing the extraction from the river. The revenue realised annually by the people dealing in this business is said to be Rs. 40 lakhs. The amount, in fact, could be double this figure. A truckload of sand sells anywhere near Rs. 1,000. With the spurt in construction activities in the Valley during the last two decades, sand extraction is a flourishing business with people some times running from pillar to the post to satisfy the masonry demands.

There are roughly 300 families engaged with the business of sand extraction in the Jhelum. The desirous persons are issued short-term permits by the Government. Given the outdated methods of extraction, 4 persons can extract a truckload of sand equivalent to 150 cubic feet within a day. The mechanical methods could increase the produce substantially, saving both time and energy. The peak season for sand extraction in the Jhelum is between September 15 and December 15, whereas January, February, March, May and June are considered lean periods.

Although the sand extraction could be a round-the-year activity, except during hostile weather and floods, there are certain restrictions imposed by the Government like during the fish breeding season (May-June) when the extraction is not allowed in the river. Likewise, in order to avoid damages to the river embankments, the extraction of sand is allowed only at the specified points. The river, otherwise, has greater potential than is actually exploited. Since the movement of trucks into the river shoals damages the embankments, much of the sand deposits in the river are allowed to be left unextracted rather than cause the damage that could prove costly during floods.

The extraction of sand in the Jhelum has two-fold benefits. On the one hand it generates income to a large number of people and on the other, it clears the channel of the river of sedimentation.

The Jhelum also provides employment to a section of *hanjis* engaged in the collection and sale of *hakh* (drift wood). These people are known, by their profession, as *hakh haenz*. The business is on decline with the alternate fuels becoming cheaply available to the consumer and consequent disappearance of *daan* (chulah) from the Kashmiri kitchen. The fuel is, however, still in demand in rural areas.

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AFTERWORD

My idea was to cover the portion of the river flowing beyond the Valley in as much detail as of the one that flows through it. However, the material about that part was not available in detail. I requested a couple of my friends here to see if they can arrange some updated material from Pakistan but, unfortunately, nothing came forward. Meanwhile, I myself planned a visit to Pakistan but the official permission took a bit too long to arrive and when it did I had already decided to go ahead with this book.

My next option was to turn to the Internet. That also did not prove as helpful as I had thought it would be, for the material on the subject was not there on the Net, save a photograph or an odd paragraph. Alternately, I put an advertisement on the web page of the Greater Kashmir requesting for information. The ad was there for over a month, courtesy, its Editor, Fayaz Ahmad Kaloo. The response, however, was not of the kind I was looking for. A gentleman from U.S.A., for instance, e.mailed a request to ring up a particular number to convey his good wishes to his friend in Kashmir who had married off his daughter recently.

Most of the mail was either good luck messages or irrelevant to the subject. A couple of persons did share their views and I take this opportunity to thank them.

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